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THE

GIFT OF PRAYER.

THE

GIFT OF PRAYER.

BY THOMAS MANN,

MINISTER OF SUN HILL CHAPEL,
WEST COWES.

"This is a great lesson, and requires still our diligence, even all our lifetime, to learn it better and better — how to pray."

ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON.

Third Edition.

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PREFACE

TO

THE THIRD EDITION.

THE second edition of this little book having been some time out of print, its Author is encouraged, by circumstances of very powerful interest, to offer it a third time for the service of the younger members of the Redeemer's family. It was originally written with special regard to the requirements of young persons, in the congregation of which he has for some years been the pastor; but there have occurred so many instances of its apparent usefulness to other persons, that he cannot question whether it be his duty to venture another edition. In its improved form, and with many and important additions, he now humbly, but with cheerful hope, commits it to the blessing of the "God that heareth prayer." To this hope he is the more encouraged by the remembrance that there is so much in the book of which he can only be supposed to claim the

credit of *compilation*. This frequent citation from other writers is, indeed, very liable to objection ; but on the particular subjects here discussed, and for the benefit of those to whom such a publication could alone be important, such a method (while it could be pursued without injury to others) appeared to the writer to be so peculiarly eligible, that he has, in truth, adopted it from preference rather than from necessity—from conviction more than from convenience. In this particular case, he would gladly have presented a book which, if adorned with a frontispiece, might have presented portraits of the wisest and best men, of various ages and communities, *uniting* to direct the young Christian to the footstool of mercy,—himself only presuming to introduce the guides, and to note the general agreement of their directions with the one absolute and inspired authority.

As this paper will be followed by the original preface and dedication, the compiler would here respectfully terminate his present remarks ; but there is a subject on which, however reluctantly, he concludes it to be desirable that, in a volume offered to the prayer-leaders of England, some few considerations should be suggested.

In the former editions, as in the present, there were hints under the head of " Objections to

Prayer-meetings." When they were written, the author had seen the " Life of the Rev. Thomas Scott ;" and the chapter was certainly prepared with the intention of inducing prayer-leaders to be careful. From the desire to avoid the admixture of controversial with devotional subjects, the matter was, however, but very briefly alluded to ; and it is also desired that nothing in *this* edition of " The Gift of Prayer" should partake of any spirit which would be inappropriate to what ought to be its general character. But prayer-leaders should be made acquainted with the observations which have been made concerning them ; and it may also be as well that their censors should know that, though their criticisms occur in very estimable volumes, we do not acknowledge the conclusiveness of their reasoning.

No one thinks of publishing a book in reply to the memoirs of SCOTT and HEBER ; or to the episode in the biography of NEFF ; but the friends of prayer-leaders do question the justness of some of the remarks in those volumes, and conceive that they inflict an undeserved imputation on a most useful exercise, and on some of the best men in various departments of the Church of Jesus Christ.

The reader will at once perceive the intention

of these suggestions, by attending to the following extract, from pages 152—155, of the second edition of "A Memoir of FELIX NEFF, Pastor of the High Alps, by W. S. GILLY, M.A., Prebendary of Durham, and Vicar of Norham."

"The practice of holding prayer-meetings, or assemblies of Christians for mutual edification, has been frequently put to the proof, but I have heard of very few instances (and those only where the organizations and proceedings were under the most sage control) in which they have not proved a temptation and a snare to some of those who have been engaged in them, for want of being kept under proper and competent management. There is a seductive tendency in them, which ministers to vanity and fond conceits; and while the humble and the diffident may be rendered uneasy and distrustful of their condition, because they cannot take a ready part in the conversation, or act of supplication in behalf of the rest, the forward may be puffed up, and indulge in lofty opinions of their own attainments. I remember well, that, in my visit to Dormilleuse, my companions and myself brought away an unfavourable opinion of a young man, who represented himself as leader in one of these assemblies, and who certainly held himself in high estimation above his companions, because of the fluency which he had acquired. Whether it was simplicity, or forwardness, he made no hesitation in telling us, that the prayer-meetings could not be maintained without him.

"A clergyman of our own church, whose name, in many places, is one of no small authority, the Rev. Thomas Scott, was once the curate of a parish where the system had been tried, under the most cautious and prudent superintendence, but he found himself constrained to refuse giving his countenance to it. For modest reasons of his own, he did not oppose himself to the practice in that parish, but he watched

its effects, and pronounced decidedly upon its inutility. He afterwards went so far as to declare that he thought it very unlikely that prayer-meetings, under any regulations, 'could be conducted in such a manner that the aggregate good would not be counter-balanced, or even over-balanced, by positive evil.' His opinion is of the greater value, because of the diffidence with which he offered it, and of the reasons he assigned for it. 'But I am, I fear, prejudiced,' said he, 'as the evils which arose from those meetings at Olney induced such an association of ideas in my mind, as probably never can be dissolved. Two or three effects were undeniable. 1. They proved hot-beds, in which superficial and discreditable preachers were raised up, who, going forth on the Lord's-day to neighbouring parishes, intercepted those who used to attend Mr. Newton. 2. Men were called upon to pray in public, whose conduct afterwards brought a deep disgrace upon the gospel. 3. They produced a captious, criticising, self-wise spirit, so that even Mr. Newton could seldom please them. These things had no small effect in leading him to leave Olney. 4. They rendered the people so contemptuously indifferent to the worship of God at the church, and, indeed, many of them to any public worship in which they did not take a part, that I never before or since witnessed anything like it, and this was one of my secret reasons for leaving Olney.'*

"The necessities of his mountain parish, and its deprivation of ministers and regular services, may in some degree justify Neff for proposing an expedient of so doubtful a nature; but one, who, like himself, went forth into a region where the harvest was ready, and the labourers few, has left his testimony on record, that, even in extreme cases, we must not resort to measures which are liable to abuse. 'The effect of them,' said Bishop Heber, when consulted upon this subject, 'is not only often confusion, but, what is

* Life of Scott, 7th edition, p. 518.

worse than confusion, self-conceit and rivalry: each labouring to excel his brother in the choice of expressions, and the earnestness of his address; and the bad effects of emulation mixing with actions in which, of all others, humility and forgetfulness of self are necessary. Such too is that warmth of feeling and language, derived rather from imitation than conviction, which, under circumstances which I have mentioned, are apt to degenerate into enthusiastic excitement, or irreverent familiarity.'"

These are grave charges; and they are made by persons for whom a large number of the friends of prayer-meetings have much Christian esteem. Their "works praise them in the gates;" and it seems difficult to account for such language, as proceeding from such men, without supposing either that each had witnessed some unlovely exhibition from some inconsistent prayer-leader; or, that the esteemed objectors were severally regarding prayer-meetings through some medium of vision common to *them*, but *not* that through which hundreds of *other* ministers of Jesus Christ have been accustomed to regard them. If the *former* of these suppositions be correct, it is of great consequence that prayer-leaders should exercise a profitable care, lest their unwatchfulness should pain benevolent and pious minds, and cause even their "good" to be "evil spoken of." The *latter* case would involve some questions of ecclesiastical polity, the merits of

other institutions, and the *rights* of Christian laymen, to the discussion of which it might be inexpedient to devote this preface; but even on *that* supposition, it would not be undesirable that the distinctive positions of the objectors should be observed and understood. On either hand, therefore, especially as these objections have been poured forth in successive editions of valued biographical works, it may be proper to remember,—

1. That Felix Neff had found the prayer-meetings useful in *his* particular circumstances; and that his biographer was *opposing*, not *illustrating*, the practices of the pious subject of his memoir.

2. That the "re-unions" in the High Alps differed considerably, in their peculiar character, from the ordinary routine of an English prayer-meeting; and that, if they even *had* produced the supposed effects, other prayer-meetings would not, of necessity, be liable to similar objections.

3. That whatever may have been the experience, or the observation, of the esteemed objector, there are pious persons and ministers who *have* heard of many instances in which prayer-meetings "have *not* done harm."

4. That the establishment of a few cases in

which the imperfections of the prayer-leaders had been unquestionably evident, would afford no just reason for depriving other men of their Christian privileges; and the rejection of every *perverted* institution would involve the sacrifice of every valuable agency in every church beneath the heavens. There is no one exercise which human infirmity cannot pervert; and if, really, "even in extreme cases, we must not resort to measures which are *liable* to abuse," then we must bid farewell to almost all that the best and wisest men now hold most dear.

5. The supposed case of "humble and diffident persons being rendered uneasy and distrustful of their condition, because they cannot take a ready part in the act of supplication," does not necessarily imply that such uneasiness or distrust would do them harm. If it induced them to learn to pray, the result would be pleasing; and, in other cases, it might be possible to comfort them without depriving other Christians of their privileges. What if they were told that "there are diversities of gifts by the same spirit?" There are duties which no believer performs as he would, and many more which some execute better than others. Is it to be admitted that a good man must not try to benefit mankind, because he may pain the minds of those who can-

not, or perhaps, after all, *only think* they cannot, perform it so well? There are methods of comforting the weak, without inflicting on them the additional pang of being made stumbling-blocks in the way of others.

6. That "the forward *may* be puffed up" is indeed true, and, alas! only *part* of the truth; for they *will* be puffed up; and the abolition of every prayer-meeting from the world would not prevent or remedy the evil. But here, also, is an abuse to which other meetings besides prayer-meetings are liable, and which other exercises besides public prayer may be made to foster in an ill-regulated mind. We do not reject the ministry because we meet with a proud preacher, nor the press because an author may over-estimate his powers. The vain prayer-leader has fallen into a snare, but his unoffending brother ought not to suffer for his crime.

7. "The very few instances" in which it is admitted that "prayer-meetings have *not* proved a temptation and a snare," are declared to have been rendered innocuous by a kind of preservative which it is possible to apply to a much larger extent, and which *is* so applied in many churches with which the esteemed objector may not be supposed to be acquainted. If it be indeed the fact, that these prayer-meetings do

injury "for want of being kept under proper management," the remedy would seem to be that the management should be supplied.

8. If there should even have been no extenuating circumstances in the case of the poor young man at Dormilleuse, the occurrence of such an incident on the High Alps would not prove that no general prayer-meeting should be held in any other district; and a similar remark may be made on the prayer-meetings at Olney, in the *last* century; from which it ought not to be inferred that laymen should have none, publicly, any where, in *this*.

9. It is not perfectly obvious that the young man at Dormilleuse was indisputably criminal. His supposed fault has been proclaimed to the world, and, in more than one edition of a popular book, there has been a publication of the "unfavourable opinion" which good men formed of his vanity and forwardness. There he has stood before the bar of the British public from year to year, and no friendly voice is heard in his defence. But, after all, when an action will admit of *two* interpretations, it is safer to incline to that which would involve the least criminality. There is much difference between "simplicity" and "forwardness;" and, if other circumstances did not compel the unfavourable opinion brought

away by our esteemed author and his friends, it would not have been a criminal act of kindness to withhold the announcement of his case, especially as the supposed culprit was a *foreigner*, a *young* man, and in circumstances in which he would be very unlikely to be able to defend himself.*

10. Whatever may have been the personal imperfections of some prayer-leaders, and how-

* Since writing the above, I have seen the *fourth* edition of Mr. Gilly's "Memoir of Neff," and, at the foot of the page repeating the charge against this young man, a note, as follows:—

"The young man here mentioned has since adopted and promulgated some very wild opinions."

This additional charge, if involving all which it seems to include, will, of course, forbid the hope implied in the above paragraph. Yet the esteemed author has, in his preface, so pleasantly and so forcibly rebutted a similar suggestion of some of the critics on himself, that it is difficult to suppress the wish that the young man also could write English, or had some personal friend who would render him such a service. The accusation of "very wild opinions" is either so grave or so innocent a matter, and its criminality depends so much on the views of the objector, that it is rather important that the accused should be heard. If, however, the poor young foreigner's case must be conceded, prayer-meetings may still be allowed. Would it be right to abolish all the colleges, because one or more of *these* may have facilitated the progress of some deluded young man who has "afterwards adopted and promulgated very wild opinions?"—T. M.

ever cautiously we ought to pronounce on the amount of success resulting from any class of Christian endeavours, there is, blessed be God! by this time, a vast addition to be reckoned with that "aggregate good" which it may be hoped had, even in the last century,* resulted

* The late venerable JOHN TOWNSEND, of Bermondsey, in the second edition of his "Nine Discourses on Prayer," published 1799, remarking on "*the blessings which attend prayer-meetings in those countries and churches where they are most frequent and best conducted,*" after illustrating the observations,

"1. They are a blessing to the country,"

"2. They are a signal blessing to our churches,"

adds, "3. They promote the edification and comfort of all the parts of the church. The afflicted, tempted, and fearful are helped to meet difficulties with more patience; and they often find the snares in which they were held broken, and themselves enabled to go on in their Christian course with joy and alacrity. They are especially of use to them who labour in the word and doctrine. Our souls are often discouraged and cast down in the arduous and weighty employ in which God has placed us; the ordinary duties and temptations of it, and the apparent unprofitableness of our labours, lead us sometimes to say, 'We have laboured in vain, and spent our strength for nought;' but, amidst them all, we can at other seasons say to our churches, as the Apostle did to one of old, 'I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your prayers, and the supply of the Spirit.' Phil. i. 19. Yes, when in meetings for prayer there is much and fervent supplication for the minister, it tends much to his profit; then he often feels his trials alleviated, and his soul strengthened to bear them

from the prayer-meetings of the pious. That we have learned the worst of what could occur from their abuse, may be presumed from the fact that one, so well acquainted with the churches, had "*never, before or since, witnessed anything like*" the painful events at Olney. "Ill news flies apace:" it may therefore be also hoped that not very many similar circumstances have since transpired, for the thought will occur that the old case would not be so perpetually cited, if new ones, of equal prominence, were frequently observed. But how delightful is the fact, that ministers and Christians of undoubted character, and who have been present at many prayer-meetings,—thousands, probably, when the objectors have not attended hundreds,—are prepared to bear witness to their conviction that

with cheerfulness and patience. The Apostle Paul acknowledges this in the following passage:—'Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.' 2 Cor. i. 11. A praying people are helpers of their minister; they become instrumental in giving him a door of utterance, and animate him to speak boldly and zealously the word of the Lord. Such people perform for their ministers the needful and honourable office which Aaron and Hur performed for Moses, when they 'stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.' Exod. xvii. 12."

immense good has resulted from the exercise. Silent worshippers are known to have been edified: the regular attendance of multitudes of these till the last days of their ability to walk to the house of God; the gracious manifestations of the Divine presence when two or three were gathered together in the name of Jesus; the sermons rendered more impressive by previous or by subsequent meetings for prayer; the Christian love excited by special prayer-meetings, when particular afflictions have threatened individuals or churches; the holy sympathies awakened for a perishing world, amidst the assemblies for missionary prayer; the religious opportunities afforded to the aged, and the poor, and the destitute; the vices corrected; the self-conceit admonished; the Sunday-school teachers encouraged; the believers qualified for useful visits to the widow, and the fatherless, and the sick in their affliction; the *not* discreditable preachers who have been raised up for ministerial and for *missionary* work among *all* denominations of evangelical Christians; the ministers and the missionaries* *encouraged* by the prayers of their

* "Oh, what hallowed music must have broken on his listening ear, and what rapture must have filled his soul, when he distinctly recognised the voice of prayer, and heard *a native*, in the accents of his mother-tongue, with an ardour that proved his sincerity, addressing petitions and thanksgivings to the throne of mercy!"—ELLIS's "*Polynesian Researches.*"

people; nay, the very fact that one of the first indications of a *decline* of piety has so often been the manifest *distaste* for the devotions of the undistinguished laity;—these, and other considerations, induce a pause, before, on any *human* authority, we yield to the doubt whether "prayer-meetings, under any regulations, could be so conducted that the aggregate good would not be counterbalanced, or even overbalanced, by positive evil."

11. It is not denied but that an evil or deceived heart may corrupt and pervert the gift of prayer, or any other endowment, or exercise, to the injury of itself, of Christ's ministers, or of the church:—but there may be reason to question whether the expression, "the EFFECTS of prayer-meetings," be not, even in these cases, too strong. There were some proud and false teachers in the church at Corinth, but the apostle did not describe these evils as "the EFFECTS of preaching." The abolition of the exercise of prophecyings would, indeed, have been a summary method of extirpating the evils, but, in rooting out the tares, it would have destroyed the wheat also. If the captious and criticising spirit be *always* found in

the conductors of prayer-meetings ; if it be *never* found in those who neglect or despise that exercise ; if the *cause* of the bad spirit be in the exercise, and not in the heart which perverts it, then a strong case is, indeed, made out against them ; but, verily, it is not so. The consistent lives, and the happy and holy deaths of many prayer-leaders, most solemnly attest that it is not so.

12. To whatever objections the remarks of SCOTT and HEBER may be liable, it is to be remembered that those venerable men do not appear to have rendered themselves responsible for their *publication*, and that it is therefore very doubtful whether the friends of prayer-meetings OUGHT to be compelled to contend *with them*. Whether any of us have been strictly just to the Olney prayer-leaders, whose offences do not seem to have been proclaimed from the press until most, or all of them, must have passed to that grave which prevents its occupant from replying to the censures of the living—whether in regard to these deceased ones we have, or have not, acted wrong in assuming that guilt which they perhaps never had the opportunity to disprove—may possibly admit of doubt.

Happily, however, no good man is likely to allow himself to think, or to feel, otherwise than

with love and veneration of SCOTT and HEBER. They were incapable of doing intentional wrong. We believe the same to be true of their biographers, and of the biographer of NEFF. We believe more—for we do not doubt but that each had an honest intention to discourage what was conceived to be an evil. But should biography be made a masked battery, in defence of opinions which the honoured dead never determined to bring fairly before the public?—about which the more judicious said, "I am, I fear, prejudiced?" Had SCOTT or HEBER openly written against prayer-meetings while they were yet with us, and had such a fact been fairly known, there were men who would have replied to them with the meekness of wisdom, and the force of truth. But it is doubtful whether their remains should, now, be held up before us in all the pomp and circumstance of war with our privileges, when we cannot defend ourselves without, at the same time, exposing the real or supposed mistakes of persons whom we ourselves should have loved too much, to be willing, avoidably, to have placed them in such a position.

On the whole, however, *some*, at least, of the friends of prayer-meetings will, quietly, but firmly, reply : "We will not, knowingly, defend the tempers or the practices of unwise or unworthy

men ; but we will not surrender the privileges with which we believe that God has endowed the members, as well as the ministers of his church. We will rather walk round the Remains of SCOTT and HEBER—placed, by their biographers, between us and our mercies—than inflict one intentional wound on the recollection of men whom we honoured while they lived, and whose memory is precious now that they are dead. We do not regret that NEWTON or SCOTT were induced to remove to London; but we do regret that any man, and especially any prayer-leading man, should have given them pain. We suppose that, had it been known at the time, their troublers, themselves, must have been rendered very unhappy: but we have some comfort in the hope that thousands of prayer-leaders have endeavoured to acknowledge, by blessings on their names, the services they rendered to the Catholic Church of Jesus Christ.

NEWTON, however, encouraged prayer-meetings. So did NEFF—till his dying-day ; and many other servants of Jesus Christ have done the same. We turn from the HEBER of the quotation, to the HEBER of the *hymns*—but especially to the HEBER of the *heavens*. So far as the citations from either can discourage the evil without destroying or injuring the good, we will

ask a blessing even upon them; but we do not believe that either of the honoured ones who have reached the paradise of God, would *now* frown on us, or on our endeavours to honour their and our adored Lord. We do know that God has owned and blessed the devotional assemblies of his people—we love, and we honour the objectors — only, we must not relinquish prayer-meetings.

December 9, 1840.

TO THE YOUNG PERSONS

ASSEMBLING FOR WORSHIP

AT SUN HILL CHAPEL, WEST COWES, ISLE OF WIGHT.

My dear young Friends,

It would have consoled me amidst the pastoral anxieties of departed days, if I could have expected to be surrounded by as many hopeful young persons, as have for some time been found among the stated attendants at our place of worship. I have regarded it as one of the greatest mercies of my last few years, that I have been permitted to observe the prayer-meetings, the sunday-school, the church, and the public preaching, enlivened by the presence, and the apparently prayerful efforts, of so many promising persons in the earlier stages of life. Considering "perseverance" as the great test of "regeneration," I dare not rejoice in your commencement of the Christian profession, as though you had long sustained the duties and the trials of the Christian life; yet amidst so much of promise, I venture to hope that there will be found among you several in whose hearts there is "some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel." That you may prove your *faith* by your *obedience*, and the sincerity of *both* by your steadfastness in the Christian life, is, I can truly say, the prayer of my heart.

In no circumstances connected with my pastoral duties have I more cordially rejoiced, than in the joyful tidings that so many of your voices have been heard in that exercise which best employs the tongue—"the glory of our frame." It is not easy to predict all the consequences which may ensue from the too uncommon exclamation "Behold! he prayeth."

After repeated reflections on the means by which I might most suitably evince my affection for you, and my interest in those labours which so many of you are pursuing for the benefit of a still younger generation, I have concluded on the publication of this little book. Regard it, my dear young friends, as dedicated to you—as a proof of my gratitude for that affectionate respect with which you have ever treated me—and as an effort to enable you to become still greater blessings to the church. The time, alas! will soon come, when most of the first builders of your place of worship—and some others who have long and honourably assisted in our meetings for prayer, will have passed from their present stage of duty; be it your anxiety that their places may be honourably filled. May the "children come up, instead of the fathers," and become a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, who shall shew forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness, into his marvellous light." May my successors in the ministry among you derive as much comfort and support, through your prayers, as I have been permitted, in the darkest seasons, to obtain through those of the elder brethren, members of your church!

The employment to which your attention is here directed, is of an extremely interesting character. Of PRAYER it is hardly possible to say too much. *Prayer* is the fulfilment of a sacred duty—the enjoyment of a holy privilege. *Prayer* draws down heaven to earth—and takes man up to heaven.

Prayer brings the creature into the presence of his Creator, his Redeemer, his Protector, and his Judge. *Prayer* honours every attribute of the great and glorious God. *Prayer* is that which God himself delights to hear. *Prayer* obtains, for the awakened sinner, the blessings which it cost the blood of Christ to purchase for his benefit. *Prayer* is that exercise of man which the Holy Spirit of God disdains not to assist. *Prayer* is one of the first employments of an awakened mind; and the dying Christian "enters heaven by *Prayer*." To *Prayer* every true Christian is accustomed. *Prayer* often marks the boundaries between religion and impiety. *Prayer* aids in preserving the prosperous from falling, while it opens cheering sources of relief to the children of mourning and of woe. *Prayer* sustains the vitality of every other Christian grace. *Prayer* is that employment of benevolence, which the most churlish cannot prevent. *Prayer* is an exercise which Christ has dignified by his example, and for which he has made provision by his death. *Prayer* is that child of charity which the poorest Christian can support. *Prayer* sanctifies the bounties of Providence and Grace. *Prayer* calms the turbulence of the ruffled mind. "Prayer," says DR. OWEN, "is the only single duty wherein every single grace is acted, every sin opposed, every good thing obtained, and the whole of our obedience in every instance of it is concerned." *Prayer* makes the sweet promise sweeter still. *Prayer* has obtained strength for the weak, courage for the timid, health for the diseased, food for the hungry, "light for those who sat in darkness," and salvation for the perishing soul. *Prayer* has availed for relatives, for friends, for neighbours, for countrymen, for the world. *Prayer* may affect eternity as well as time. Deprive a Christian of the privilege of prayer, and you reduce him near the level of the meanest creatures—but this is a catastrophe that can never occur, for *Prayer* is his char-

tered right, secured by the covenant of grace, purchased by the blood of Christ, encouraged by the promise of the Father, and assisted by the "help" of the Holy Spirit.

The excellent publications of Bishop Wilkins, Dr. Watts, and the Rev. Matthew Henry, are eminently worthy to be studied by every young person. To those who can premeditate the method of a prayer, they cannot fail to afford important aid; and even those who find that a previous arrangement rather perplexes them than otherwise, will yet, in the writings of these eminent men, notice many suggestions by which their extemporary prayers will be assisted. To these publications—and they are generally of easy purchase—I would affectionately direct the attention of you all; while I do venture to hope that after having been interested and profited at some thousands of prayer-meetings, I am not presumptuous in supposing that I may have become able to offer a few additional suggestions which may tend to the improvement of your gifts. I venture, therefore, to quote a part of the language of one of these gifted men, though without supposing my own performance will as fully justify the indulgence of such hopes: "That bright ornament of the church, the learned Dr. Wilkins, bishop of Chester, has left us an excellent performance, much of the same nature with this, in his discourse concerning the gift of prayer; which some may think makes this of mine unnecessary; but the multiplying of books of devotion is what few serious Christians will complain of; and as, on the one hand, I am sure those that have this poor essay of mine will still find great advantage by that, so, on the other hand, I think those who have that may yet find some farther assistance by this."*

There is one class of not unpromising youths among you to whom it is possible that these "Hints" may prove more

* Matthew Henry—*Preface to Method of Prayer.*

effectively serviceable, than a treatise on any method of prayer which should proceed on the exclusive principle of previous arrangement. Continuous thought is far more difficult to some minds than wise and learned men have always conceived; and what is easy to persons habituated to the act of public speaking, may prove a fearful task to many Christians, who neither are, nor aspire to be, masters in that art.

It is indeed observable, notwithstanding the obvious preference of Henry and Watts for premeditated prayer, that the extemporary method is more commonly adopted; and though there are, doubtless, some cases in which young persons have abandoned the former from mere idleness, or from undue discouragement on the failure of their first efforts in that way, yet it is also observable that many do succeed, and succeed admirably, in the attempt to express their thoughts before God, as those thoughts are suggested in the very act of prayer. It is true, as Matthew Henry has observed, that "a man may write straight without having his paper ruled;" and perhaps—with regard at least to some minds—it is not far from the truth, that *the ruling would only perplex them.*

I would not speak lightly of premeditated prayer, for on many accounts I conceive it to be more advantageous, and especially to some persons, than the extemporary method; but as I know that there are Christians, and eminent Christians too, who, after repeated trials, find that they pray in a more orderly manner by following the latter method, it does seem to me a matter of some importance to offer suggestions, which, while they will not tend to fetter the arrangement, may in some degree improve the spirit and the general expression of extemporary supplication. Permit me also to state, as the following observations are not necessarily connected with each other, that the appalling

aspect of XLIII numerals need not prevent a Christian of even feeble memory from attempting to profit by what they may suggest. There is an obvious difference between a number of rules arising out of, or strictly associated with, every other in the series, and so many "hints," either of which may be regarded and remembered without a continuous effort of the memory in prayer.

As many of the following pages are occupied by extracts from that BOOK which it may be reasonably expected that all my readers have long possessed and used for themselves, it may be proper to state my reasons for printing at length so numerous a collection of passages from the Bible. Suffer me, therefore, to mention, that having ventured to write on a subject which had occupied the pens of such distinguished men, and having mentioned some things which I had not found in their publications, I deemed it desirable to strengthen my remarks by quotations from the highest possible authority. On the more important topics of moral and spiritual preparation for the exercise, it seemed to me also an advantage that the WORD OF GOD should be readily presented to the eye, and without that interruption which repeated reference must necessarily have occasioned. In the quotations from Scripture, you will not indeed always find the words quoted to have been primarily connected with the exercise of prayer; but I trust they will generally be observed to involve some *principle* which justifies their introduction for the specific purpose to which they are here applied.* My own labour has certainly not been

* It is not to be reckoned a perverting of Scripture, but it is agreeable to the usage of many divines, especially the fathers, and I think is warranted by divers quotations from the New Testament out of the Old, to allude to a Scripture phrase, and to make use of it by way of accommodation to another sense, than what was the first intendment of it, provided it agree with the analogy of faith.—HENRY.

lessened by this method of illustration; and there will doubtless, be some readers who will consider it a recommendation to a work of this character, that an attempt has been made to conduct it on the principle that *the words of God to us suggest the truest rules for our words in addressing* HIM.

I have prolonged these prefatory remarks to a length which I did not intend; but *you*, I trust, will forgive me. I love to think of you, I love to pray for you, I love to preach to you; and after thus endeavouring to employ my pen for your benefit, I will also add, I love to write to you, and have therefore not been in haste to close my dedication. It will of course afford me high gratification if what has been meant for you should, through the mercy of God, be rendered serviceable to any other person; and I may venture to express the opinion of some of my dear brethren, the ministers of this neighbourhood, that a book of this kind is needed in other congregations; but as this effort would certainly not have seen the light but for my hope that it would interest *you*, it is only honest that I should state that the *first* desire of my soul will be gratified if it should prove of the slightest service to *you*. Subjoining to my other friendly hints the entreaty for your earnest prayers in behalf of your pastor and his little book,

I am,

My dear young friends,

With unfeigned affection,

Yours in the Lord,

THOMAS MANN.

West Cowes, June, 1832.

PREFACE

TO

THE FIRST EDITION.

If these pages were *only* published in the circle for which they were originally intended, the writer would hardly feel it necessary to apologize for their appearance, conceiving that he was providentially directed to an effort on behalf of several young friends, of whom he had heard the delightful language, "Behold! they pray;" but in venturing to present the volume for wider circulation, and thus presuming to offer a supplement where Wilkins, Henry, and Watts have long been considered sufficient instructors, he cannot conceal from himself that some reasons for such a publication may be demanded by the most candid reader. The following are therefore respectfully submitted:—

1. The increase of books of a devotional character can hardly be considered an evil; and among the very numerous publications of the present day, the writer is not aware of the existence of any precisely of the character of that which is here submitted.

2. Through the mercy of God, many young persons, in various parts of the church of Christ, have lately been excited to anxiety on the subject to which these pages relate.

3. Prayer-leaders are almost the only class of benevolent men for whose encouragement some new books have not lately appeared. We have modern publications for singers, for Sunday-school teachers, and for village preachers: it seems, therefore, but just that an additional effort has been made for our praying men, *who are probably the instruments of bringing down a blessing on the whole.*

4. Some attempts have been made, in the last few years, to prejudice the public mind against prayer-leaders and prayer-meetings; but with the exception of a few short pieces in the magazines, and a tract or two for particular churches, little has been attempted—by the press at least—to *remedy* or to *prevent* the evils on account of which such services have been condemned.

5. The writer has not chosen to become a guide in this matter without securing the aid of men whose names are dear to the churches. By placing beside his own remarks the compositions of Leighton, Wilkins, Henry, Watts, Hall, Jenkins, Watson, Gurnall, Ambrose, Brooks, Blair, Campbell, Newton, and Owen, he may have taken a very probable method of making himself appear insignificant; and some readers may suppose his book to be a *mere* compilation; but as he can truly affirm that he has in many cases erased his own remarks where he could substitute a similar idea in the language of those who were likely to be considered more competent authority, he confidently hopes that the quotations will be regarded in the light for which he has employed them—as the testimonies of so many great and good men to the truth and importance of the suggestions which are offered.

Though most persons *who do not need* such a book as this must be well acquainted with the previous writers on the subject, the author is not without hope that his little work

may be the means of directing *some* beginners to Wilkins, Henry, and Watts, and thus proving an *introduction*, as well as a *supplement*, to the useful treatises of those eminent men. Greatly as these are valued by advanced or well informed Christians, it does sometimes happen that they are not even *known* by young prayer-leaders at the time when they most require them; and if this publication itself, or any strictures it may occasion, should be the means of directing *one* of these persons to the old writers, it will not have been written in vain.

An *ineffectual* attempt to present the volume to his young people on the day of commencing the eleventh year of his ministry in their place of worship, has occasioned the writer to put it in the press at an earlier period than he would deliberately have thought advisable; but he hopes that those for whom, in the first place, he has written, will not regret that he has endeavoured to supply them directly with what was within his reach at the period of their greatest necessity. If there should be any future opportunity of improving the book, he will endeavour to render it more serviceable; but, at the call of a merciful Providence, he would rather be pitied for inefficiency, or blamed for precipitation, than feel that he had not even *tried* to help his young people to engage in prayer-meetings.

June, 1832.

THE

GIFT OF PRAYER.

I. — ON THE LAWFULNESS OF DESIRING TO EXCEL IN THE GIFT OF PRAYER.

"Whatever a man doth, he must do it by virtue of his calling, receiving warrant from *that*, else he cannot do it by faith."
SCUDDER.

THE inhabitants of some of the Balearic Isles are said never to have pruned a fruit-tree, "thinking it impious to presume to direct its growth, and thus to attempt to amend the works of Providence!"

In a similar spirit of sincere but unnecessary and unprofitable fear, some otherwise estimable Christians have cherished a strange dread of any attempt to cultivate the mind for spiritual purposes. Admiring and enjoying superior qualifications, when these could be supposed to be of spontaneous growth, or to have resulted from the direct endowments of Heaven, they have feared

to employ, or to recommend, one systematic effort for the improvement of spiritual gifts.

If these were the principles or dispositions encouraged by the BIBLE, it would of course be imperative that we should submit our reason to its dictates. But when so many substantial advantages have accrued both from the cultivation of the plants, and the diligent improvement of the human mind, it is of consequence that we be careful lest we mistake our own prejudices for the teachings of the Spirit of God. The Minorquins could not prove, from the Scriptures, that it is wrong to prune the vine—the advocates of an uncultured piety could not more easily shew that it is wrong to train the trees of righteousness for greater fruitfulness in religion.

God, who withholds not his blessing from the cultured vine, will not withdraw his influences from a spirit which seeks to honour HIM by the employment of suitable methods for the increased fruitfulness of the soul.

The Holy Scriptures which teach us to value, and to employ the direct endowments of Heaven, also enjoin it as our duty to "stir up the gift of God" that is in us:—their great principles involve the importance of growth and advancement in the service of God. They condemn, indeed, the pharisaic disposition, and the allow-

ance of an unholy emulation, but they suggest inducements of a more exalted character,—and they offer no compliments to the sluggishness of a negligent and self-satisfied religion. They make it our imperative duty to be "wise unto that which is good,"—to seek that we may "excel to the edifying of the church,"—to "covet earnestly the best gifts,"—and not to neglect the qualifications with which already we are endowed. They present no point, short of perfection, with which we should be satisfied; and therefore supply perpetual inducements to diligence and hope.

If worship be a *duty*, the more wisely and aptly we are enabled to perform that duty, the more suitably shall we be fulfilling the requirements of Heaven. If prayer be a *privilege*, it is desirable we should enjoy it in the highest possible degree; and that our powers of enjoyment should "grow with our growth, and strengthen with our strength." If prayer include both privilege and duty, then the twofold inducement should provoke the most ardent endeavour of every mind which can feel the sweetly constraining influence of such holy considerations. If the qualification for prayer be a *grace*, its growth must be of importance as affording an illustration of the power and the goodness of God in improving the minds of his people; and

it cannot and it ought not to remain in a condition of immature development. If it be a *gift*, it is a talent of which *five* or *ten* may be made; and its possessor is responsible for its improvement as much as for its use.

It is not a crime, but a virtue, to endeavour to excel in a spiritual exercise—if the effort be induced by a scriptural motive, and if it be conducted in the temper of piety.

"Industry on our parts is not superseded by the greatness and freeness of God's grace, as when a schoolmaster teaches a boy gratis, the youth cannot attain to learning, without some application of his own; and yet it doth not therefore cease to be free on the teacher's part, because attention is required from the learner; so it is here."*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

I would have you wise unto that which is good. Rom. xvi. 9.

Desire spiritual gifts. 1 Cor. xiv. 1.

Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. 1 Cor. xiv. 12.

Covet earnestly the best gifts. Cor. xii. 31.

Neglect not the gift that is in thee. 1 Tim. iv. 14.

Stir up the gift of God which is in thee. 2 Tim. i. 6.

If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Phil. iv. 8.

* Arrowsmith.

II.—ON THE DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF LEARNING TO PRAY.

To this you will say, that "the trouble is very great." True, but it is well employed.—SUTCLIFFE'S OSTERVALD.

THE power to worship without a form is attended with so much advantage, that any reasonable effort will be well repaid by its attainment—if only in a moderate degree.

Bishop WILKINS writes—"For any one to satisfy himself with a form of prayer, is still to remain in infancy. It is the duty of every Christian to grow and increase in all the duties of Christianity, gifts as well as graces. Now, how can a man be said to live suitable to these rules, who doth not put forth himself in some endeavours of this kind?"

Dr. WATTS observes—"Were the business of prayer nothing else but to come and beg mercy of God, it would be the duty of every man to know how to draw up such petitions, and present them in such a way as becomes a spiritual petitioner. But prayer is a work of a much larger extent."

To these harmonious remarks of two eminent Christians, who even differed on the expediency of employing a form in public worship, it may be proper to append a brief statement of some

advantages attending the power to pray in our own words; viz.—

1. It enables a person to express his wants and feelings before God; and in a method which, even naturally speaking, is likely to interest his own mind, and to lead to the expression of the general dispositions of *his heart.*

2. Varying circumstances, feelings, wants, and mercies, seem to require either such a variety of forms as will meet the exigencies of the Christian life, or the ability to pray without the employment of any form.

3. In journeying, or on a sudden emergency, especially if more than ejaculation be desirable, it is an advantage to be able to employ the language of prayer, in a manner agreeable to the demand of circumstances.

4. Free or extemporary prayers admit an expression of the *growing* qualities of the spiritual mind, and, if well conducted, give the inimitable loveliness of *nature* to the character of the exercise.

5. A Christian is likely to prove a greater blessing to his family, in proportion as he is prepared amidst the ever-changing scenes of life, to embody their particular wants before the throne of grace.

6. In the sick chamber, the power to pray

may render a charitable donation more acceptable, and occasion the visitant to be more welcome for his prayers than for the gifts he has taken in his hand. Some sick persons, also, need *prayer* more than they require *instruction;* and when this is *not* the case, such may happen to *learn* from the *worship* of one who has not ability to teach in a didactic form.

7. In the social circle, ability in prayer may give a profitable character to the associations of a whole evening; and a meeting in this way, around the cheerful fire-side is one of the best preparatives for a meeting in the chamber of affliction. They who have been our fellow-suppliants in parlour prayer are likely to be most welcome visitants to our dying pillows.

8. God has often blessed the public prayers of consistent Christians at meetings for this purpose; and they are well adapted to answer some objections of the infidel. Are the thousands of men who, without fee or reward, engage in prayer for the prosperity of Messiah's kingdom, *all* slaves of priestly domination? Can religion be, what the vulgar sometimes call it, *a mere trade*, when so many good and sensible men, not only *freely* pay for its support, but make it manifest by their prayers that *they understand* what they are supporting? What a

comfort, too, is a good prayer-meeting to a faithful minister, and how likely he is to ascertain the state of his congregation, by this spiritual thermometer!

9. In the absence or illness of the minister, or, indeed, in *any* case of destitution in the church, it is most important that it should contain persons who can hold a meeting for prayer; and thus sustain the first and great design of public worship. It has been complained that "prayer-meetings have ultimately led improper persons to preach;" but *the contempt of prayer-meetings has produced the same effect.* If the gift of prayer were commonly cultivated and valued in the churches, unsuitable persons would not often be hurried to the pulpit, as a remedy for the very affecting catastrophe of having ONLY a prayer meeting!

ILLUSTRATIONS.

I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. 1 Cor. x. 15.

Jesus Christ opened his mouth and taught them, saying, And when thou prayest, &c. See Matt. v. 2, and vi. 5 to 15. It cannot but be lawful to *learn* on a subject on which Jesus *condescended to teach.*

And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples, And he said unto them, when ye pray, say—Our Father, &c. The disciple here seems to have been overcome by the

peculiar character of our Lord's own prayer, and to have felt (what, indeed, is not uncommon when some of Christ's followers pray even now) a wish to pray like him to whose prayer he had been attentive; and the blessed Jesus, so far from discouraging the wish to *learn to pray*, immediately gave instructions which might assist the effort.

Paul, the apostle, not only told Timothy to pray, but taught him the *subjects of prayer*, (see 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2,) the *encouragements* of prayer, (v. 3, 4,) the *spirit* in which prayer should be offered, (v. 8,) the *gesture* of prayer, (v. 8,) the *place* of prayer. (v. 8.)

Learn to do well. Isaiah, i. 17.

All may learn. 1 Cor. xiv. 31.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Phil. iv. 8, 9.

III.—ON THE ENCOURAGEMENTS TO ATTEMPT TO PRAY, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSEVERANCE IN THE EXERCISE.

The timid lukewarm soul is ever disposed to cry out "there is a lion in the way." The Christian's motto must be "Perseverance," and for our encouragement the Gospel assures us, that in due season we shall reap if we faint not. — DR. COPE.

To pray without a form is not so difficult as those who have never tried may generally conceive. It is not reasonable to suppose that a person who is able to conduct the verbal intercourse of life would be unable to employ his

tongue in devotion—if he were only as much accustomed to, and as much interested by, the latter as the former. Why should the primary intention of the powers of speech be the only purpose for which a human being must continue to be incapable of using them?

First efforts are not always more successful in prayer than in any other engagement, but that is not a conclusive reason for neglecting a further attempt. "Some young persons," says Dr. WATTS, "may be so foolish and unhappy as to make two or three bold attempts to pray in company, before they have well learned to pray in secret; and finding themselves much at a loss, and bewildered in their thoughts, or confused for want of presence of mind, they have abandoned all hopes, and contented themselves with saying, it is impossible: and as they have tempted God, by rashly venturing upon such an act of worship, without any due care and preparation; so they have afterwards thrown the blame of their own sloth upon God himself; and cried, it is a mere gift of heaven; but God hath not bestowed it upon me. This is, as if a youth, who had just begun to read logic, should attempt immediately to dispute in a public school, and finding himself baffled and confounded, should cast away his book, renounce his studies,

and say, 'I shall never learn it, it is impossible;' whereas, when we seek any attainment, we must begin both regularly and gradually towards perfection, with patience and labour."

The old maxim, "practice teaches where precepts fail," was never more remarkably applicable than in reference to the gift of prayer.

Let not the young Christian be discouraged, if, from the failure of his first attempts, he should perceive it will be a work of time for him to express his thoughts with readiness in prayer. As there is no latent power of man more imperfectly developed, in early childhood, than the faculty of speech; so it will not be surprising if the "new-born babe" should in the infancy of grace be only able to express its wants in tears and sighs before God—in "groanings which cannot be uttered." Still, as the children of God are not destined to perpetual babyhood, the broken accents of their earliest spiritual life may be expected to give way to the more distinct and ready utterance of matured Christian grace.

In the case of children, fluency of speech is acquired by progressive and almost insensible degrees: words, phrases, sentences, and lengthened discourses, naturally follow each other. The little ones stumble, but they *try again*. Criti-

cism, though it may displease them, helps to correct their errors; their eyes and ears assist their tongues; and habit promotes the ultimate employment of all the advantages which reading, hearing, and observation, have placed within their reach.

Thus, also, so far as instrumentality is concerned, the most eminently qualified leaders of prayer have usually attained their valuable gifts. Had they sunk under the discouragement of first failures, many of these would never have enjoyed the capabilities for which themselves, as well as others, have reason to be thankful. If Cicero once lisped like any other babe, and if Demosthenes spake ungracefully at a later stage, there can be no good reason why *a Christian*, with *his* motives and promises of help, should yield to the discouraging influence of an early failure in this employment of his tongue. Even mediocrity would indeed be profitable here.

Some of the churches are more destitute of good prayer leaders than they would have been had they not frowned on the first efforts of young Christians; and many a believer remains a stammerer for want only of *perseverance*.

Remembering how much time and effort is employed by some young persons who are merely attempting to acquire the lighter accomplishments, young Christians have often occasion for regret that they have devoted so little attention to the sublime purpose of acquiring a capability to be useful in the church. Half the time and attention sometimes devoted to trifling pursuits would secure attainments of consequence for eternity.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

The babe wept, and she had compassion on him. Exod. ii. 6. . . . . I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue, Exod. iv. 10. . . . . The prayer of Moses, the man of God.—Title to Psalm xc. See also Exod. xv. and note the beautiful advancement in the qualities of Moses.

They go from strength to strength. Psalm lxxxiv. 70.

Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. Gal. vi. 9.

Grow in grace. 2 Peter, iii. 18.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things. 1 Cor. xii. 11.

Out of weakness were made strong. Heb. xi. 34.

The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 1 Cor. xii. 7.

I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth, ... Take therefore the talent from him. Matt. xxv. 25, 28.

The slothful man saith there is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets. Prov. xxvi. 13.

And it came to pass at *the seventh time*, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, shout, for the Lord hath given you the city. Joshua, vi. 16.

And David went going and growing. 2 Sam. v. 10. (Margin.)

And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue; whom, when Aquila and Priscilla saw, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of the Lord more perfectly. Acts, xviii. 25, 26.

Doth not even nature itself teach you? 1 Cor. xi. 14.

IV. — PROPRIETY OF IMPLORING THE HELP OF GOD IN PRAYER.

If the Father can hear, the Spirit can help; if the Son can intercede, the Spirit can assist. Why, then, if I am not visionary when I say "God will hear me," should I be called so, or think myself so, when I say "the Spirit will help me"?

REV. R. PHILIP.

IN employments of far less consequence than Divine worship, it is both lawful and expedient to ask a blessing from God.

Believers are not authorized to expect competent qualification for the performance of *other* duties without prayer. Why, then, should they expect to worship appropriately without imploring the help of God?

The wisest man was instructed to say, "Lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge the Lord, and He shall direct thy paths."

Whether the heart, the understanding, or the utterance, be contemplated, it is important to implore the help of God in prayer and praise.

Man never more urgently requires *wisdom*

than when he is about to converse with the all-wise God. At *such* a time he has, therefore, peculiar reason to implore that wisdom from Him "who giveth liberally to all men, and upbraideth not."

"Great and precious promises" declare that entreaty on such a subject will not be offered in vain—if offered in the name of Christ, and in the fear of God.

The narratives of Holy Scripture prove that the Lord has condescended to aid the utterance of good men, in answer to prayer.

"After Christ had answered the request of his disciples, and taught them how to pray, by giving them a pattern of prayer, he recommends them to ask his Father for the Holy Spirit, in order to a fuller and further assistance and instruction in this work of prayer, as the whole context seems to intimate. See Luke xi."*

"Although we are thus externally taught by our Saviour's doctrine, yet unless we be taught within by the Spirit, we are never the nearer, we know neither what to ask, nor how to ask; but that is a happy supply, and they may rejoice in it that have it. The Spirit of God helping their infirmities, and making intercession for them. How should they speed in their suits

* Watts.

with God, that have both his own Spirit interceding, by framing and inditing their petitions, and his own Son interceding at his right hand by his merits!"*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech and of slow tongue. And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I, the Lord? Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say. Ex. iv. 10.

Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart. Ps. x. 17.

The Lord giveth wisdom. Prov. ii. 6.

The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. Prov. xvi. 1.

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications. Zech. xii. 10.

It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. John, vi. 45.

Likewise the Spirit, also, helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for, as we ought. Rom. viii. 26.

In everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge . . . . So that ye come behind in no gift. 1 Cor. i. 5, 7.

Praying always, with all prayer, and supplication in the spirit. Eph. vi. 18.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God. James, i. 5.

* Archbishop Leighton.

The wisdom that is from above is pure. James, iii. 13.
Lord, teach us to pray. Luke, xi. 1.
Praying in the Holy Ghost. Jude, 21.

V.—PRAYER TO BE OFFERED TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

I believe that God is so holy and pure, that it is impossible for Him to be pleased in any creature, so that neither angel, man, nor world, could stand one moment in his eye, without beholding the same in the face of a Mediator. — LORD BACON.

IT is of the first consequence to remember that God is to be worshipped, by all Christians, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"God will not look pleasingly on us, if we come without Christ; he is no *Throne of Grace* without him; it is Christ who makes that which was a Bar of Justice, a Bench of Mercy. Do we fall upon the *Duty* of Prayer? do it not in the strength of man, but in the strength of Christ: say, Lord, I am come alone in the merits of Christ, to partake of the merits of the Lord Jesus: I have endeavoured to prepare myself through thy grace, but I look not for admission through my preparations or dispositions, but through the blood and mediation of Jesus Christ."*

"We might as well be set to remove moun-

* Ambrose.

tains, as to pray without the strength of Christ: *without me*, saith Christ, ye can do nothing."*

"Our works, they are not only impotent, but impure too, as they come from us: it is Christ that must put validity to them, it is Christ that must put his own odours to them, it is Christ that must put both spirit and merit to them, his grace to work, and his blood to own them, for whatever comes from his Spirit, it is presented through his merit: here is great comfort . . . . To this purpose there was given to Christ much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne, and the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the Saints, ascended before God out of the Angel's hand. Rev. viii. 3, 4."*

"When Uzziah would offer incense without a priest, God was angry, and struck him with leprosy; so when we do not come in Christ's name, in prayer, we offer up incense without a priest, and what can we expect, but to meet with wrath."†

To forget Christ in the act of prayer, is to insult Him whose will it is "that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father."

To forget Christ, in the engagements of devotion, is to have read the New Testament in vain.

* Ambrose. † T. Watson.

To forget Christ, in worship, is to reject the sacrifices of the former covenant, without any proper substitute; and thus to reflect on the purity of that "law," which "is holy, just, and good."

To forget Christ, in the hour of prayer, is to despise the commandment of his latter incarnate days; and to set at nought the benefits resulting from his death.

To forget Christ, when approaching the God of heaven, is to venture friendless and alone before that throne where every sinner needs an advocate.

To forget Christ, in the act of attempted intercourse with God, is to insult Jehovah from his very footstool.—If, indeed, it be possible to approach so near the throne, otherwise than by the Mediator.

To forget Christ, in worship, is *not* to do the will of God "on earth, as it is done in heaven."

To forget Christ, is to sin against the wisdom, the holiness, the justice, the truth, the faithfulness, the long-suffering, the goodness, and the mercy of Jehovah. It is, in short, to offend *every* attribute of God.

To forget Christ, is to afford the most certain

evidence that the mind is not influenced by the very dispositions which evince a preparedness for believing prayer: it is to prove that we are yet in unbelief.

To forget Christ, is to claim kindred with the heathen, and affinity with "despisers," who shall "wonder and perish."

To forget Christ, is to inflict an injury upon ourselves—a kind of injury too which Satan could not inflict—it is "to make the cross of Christ of none effect."

To forget Christ, is to place ourselves in circumstances in which we may dread to read that Scripture,—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."

To forget Christ, is to forget Him who deserves better treatment at our hands.

To forget Christ, is to despise the examples or precepts of patriarchs, prophets, priests, apostles, evangelists, martyrs, righteous men in every age, and even of the holy angels.

To forget Christ, is to grieve the Holy Spirit, whose most eminent teachings "testify of Him."

To forget Christ, is to prove that we do indeed imperfectly see that throne where he is ever present as an intercessor.

To forget Christ, is to forget the ONLY SAVIOUR.

To reject Christ, is to make it manifest, that true virtue has no charms in *our* eyes, that we do indeed *deserve* the curse which unerring truth has pronounced; that we have hard hearts, blind understandings, perverse wills, corrupt imaginations, loving darkness rather than light because our deeds are evil, and determined not to come to the knowledge of the truth that we may be saved. Strange that any with such dispositions should profess to be good natured! Good-natured rejecters of Jesus Christ!

"Remember, O Christian, that for a sinner to appear before God without the Mediator, is a thing of infinite terror, and not of comfort."*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. John, xiv. 6.

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. John, xiv. 13.

I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. John, xv. 16.

Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask and receive, that your joy may be full. John, xvi. 23, 24.

Who also maketh intercessions for us. Rom. viii. 34.

For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Eph. ii. 18.

* Watts' Sermons.

In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence by the faith of him. Eph. iii. 12.

My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Phil. iv. 19.

Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. Col. iii. 17.

There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. 1 Tim. ii. 5.

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Acts, iv. 12.

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Heb. iv. 14, 16.

Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec. Heb. vi. 20.

But this, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him. Heb. vii. 24, 25.

We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. 1 John, ii. 1.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil

conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Heb. x. 19, 22.

Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Rev. i. 6.

For the law made nothing perfect, but it was the bringing in of a better hope;* by the which we draw nigh unto God. Heb. vii. 19.

Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg? Job, vi. 6.

VI. — THE USES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE IN AFFORDING QUALIFICATIONS FOR PRAYER.

A thousand oracles divine
Their common beams unite,
That sinners may with angels join
To worship God aright.

WESLEY.

IT is not reasonable to expect ability for any spiritual exercise—and in particular for the engagements of prayer and praise—without frequent and devotional reflection on the sacred volume. The character of God, the nature of prayer itself, our own true circumstances, the nature of our wants, and the foundations of hope before God—important preparatives for worship—can hardly be adequately learned without direct and frequent applications to the Scriptures.

* See marginal reading.

The promises, the precepts, the histories, the examples, and the statements of the word of God, are severally calculated to instruct the mind, and to affect the heart in devotion. Pure spiritual truth is derived from the Bible; and here are no mistakes, for "every word of God is pure." We may obtain drops of knowledge elsewhere, but here is the everflowing fountain; other writings may present some borrowed outlines, but here are the original records, traced, indeed, by the hands of men, but under the guidance of the "only wise God,"—for "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Sir Isaac Newton, in his riper years, acknowledged with great ingenuousness to Dr. Pemberton, his "*mistake* at the beginning of his mathematical studies in applying himself to the works of Des Cartes, and other algebraical writers, before he had *considered* the Elements of Euclid with that attention which so excellent a writer deserves." Surely the Elements of Euclid are not more a foundation in mathematics than the Bible in religion.

"How cold and dead doth a prayer appear, that is composed in the most elegant forms of speech which are natural to our tongue, when it is not heightened by that solemnity of phrase

which may be drawn from the sacred writings? It has been said by some of the ancients, that if the gods were to talk with men, they would certainly speak in Plato's style; but I think we may say with justice, that, when mortals converse with their Creator, they cannot do it in so proper a style as that of the holy Scriptures."*

Coleridge says, "Intense study of the Bible will keep any man from being *vulgar*, in point of style." Perhaps this is the reason why some men use better language after conversion than before; and why Christians are occasionally observed to speak more correctly in prayer than in any other exercise.

"That divine Spirit which indited the inspired volume has taken care that we should never be at a loss for materials for devotion. Not a prophet or apostle but has more or less contributed to the sacred fund . . . . . However indigent in himself, no one can complain of want who has access to such a magazine of intellectual treasure."†

"Finally, those who are a mouth for the church to God in our prayer meetings, should endeavour to furnish their minds well with the

* Spectator. † Mrs. H. More.

knowledge of Scripture: this will not only assist them to offer suitable petitions, but give them a facility of expression which will prove pleasant to themselves and edifying to others. The use, however, of Scripture expressions is carried to an extreme when they make the whole of prayer, and are introduced without any regard either to propriety or connexion."*

NOTE.—As the Psalter contains the largest proportion of prayer and praise, those who would excel in such exercises are likely to derive peculiar advantage from prayerful reflection on this part of Scripture: remembering, of course, that the Gospel supplies the true principles by which the Jewish Psalms become available to the Christian.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Psalm cxix. 18.

When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel, in their hearing. Deut. xxxi. 11.

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. Psalm xix. 7.

I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me. Psalm cxix. 93.

The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple. Psalm cxix. 30.

To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not

according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Isaiah, viii. 20.

They have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them? Jer. viii. 9.

Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? Mic. ii. 7.

Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures? Mark, xii. 24.

So worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets. Acts, xxiv. 14.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning. Rom. xv. 4.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; *that the men of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto every good work.* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

VII.—INTEGRITY ESSENTIAL TO ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP.

He (God) never did, and never will, answer hypocritical prayers. — R. PHILIP.

"HIM that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" is the merciful statement of the Lord Jesus Christ; and no declaration of Holy Scripture has been more eminently illustrated, or more abundantly confirmed. "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation."

Still there are men whose prayer is an offence against God—whose "sacrifice is abomination;" and to reconcile the painful fact with the gra-

cious promise, we must consult the unerring word. Perhaps the following considerations may assist in removing the needless fears of a true penitent, or the vain confidence of an unbeliever.

1. "Coming to Christ," either in mental or verbal prayer, is an exercise which implies the existence of dispositions which are not found in the hearts of entirely unrenewed men.

2. It is not the atrocity of previous guilt which proves an obstacle to the bestowment of Divine Mercy—for God has devised a way by which "he can be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus,"—but the *insincerity* or *impenitence* of the mind at the *time of the utterance of prayer* prevents an acceptable approach to God.

3. Even among good *men*, there is more disposedness to forgive great sins which are repented of, than to forget smaller offences where there is a continued estrangement of the heart.

4. The principle of forgiveness on which it is thus common for Christians to act, accords with the express command of Christ. "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee *saying, I repent;* thou shalt forgive him."

5. The Lord's prayer gives encouragement to expect from "Our Father who is in Heaven" the exercise of that benevolence which, according to his command, we are desired to evince towards our fellow men. "Forgive us our trespasses, *as* we forgive them that trespass against us."

6. The Gospel requires that renewal of the mind which cannot be experienced without leading to repentance for sins that are past, and to anxiety for holiness in every future stage of the Christian life.

It is, therefore, obvious—

I. That unrepented sin is a barrier to the acceptance of worship.

II. That insincerity will desecrate a religious service, however becoming its external performance.

"To present the living God with a carcass of lifeless worship, is to pay him with shells of services, and so to mock him; and it is a more admirable long-suffering in Him to defer the punishment of such devotion than all the other sins in the world."*

A man who has prayed in the assembly of the saints, and afterwards died without religion, will be *a marked man* in hell.

* Leighton.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Wherefore liest thou upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, ... up, sanctify the people. Josh. vii. 10, 13.

I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. 1 Sam. ii. 30.

They read in the Book of Moses, ... that the Ammonite and Moabite should not come into the congregation of God, for ever. Neh. xiii. 1.

Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and according to mine integrity that is in me. Psalm vii. 8.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. Psalm lxvi. 18.

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight. Prov. xv. 8.

The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind. Prov. xxi. 27.

He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination. Prov. xxviii. 9.

Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy. Prov. xxviii. 13.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord . . . . . Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Is. i. 10—18.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Is. lv. 7.

Behold, the Lord's arm is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear. Is. lix. 1, 2.

Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts the God of Israel, amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Jer. vii. 2, 3.

They made their hearts as an adamant-stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts. Therefore it came to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts. Zech. vii. 12, 13.

Then they shall cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them; he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings. Micah, iii. 4.

O ye generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Matt. xii. 34.

God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. John, iv. 24.

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Matt. xxv. 4.

Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. John, ix. 31.

Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Rom. xiv. 23.

If ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. 1 Pet. i. 17.

And they shall speak, and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Isa. xiv. 10.

VIII. — THE GRACE OF PRAYER MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE GIFT.

A sanctified heart is better than a silver tongue.—DYER.

HOWEVER desirable it may be to excel in what is termed the gift of prayer, the grace of prayer is of greater consequence.

GOD regards the heart.

Mere fine speeches do not avail before the throne of the Most High. "Certainly that prayer reacheth not the heart of God which reacheth not our own."*

The grace of prayer will more frequently bring the gift in its train, than the gift will bring the grace.

The unaffected prayer of an unlearned Christian will interest most wise men, more than a splendid oration from an unimpressed heart.

The pharisees could make *long* prayers, and —for aught we know—*fine* prayers, but the

* Gouge.

blessed Jesus said more in condemnation of the pharisees, than in censure of any other men.

The grace of prayer is an evidence of true Christianity; the gift may be possessed by the worst of men. No good man would covet Balaam's gifts, if with them he must have Balaam's heart, or Balaam's end.*

The devils "besought" Christ, but not with the grace of prayer.

The person whose gifts profit others, while they are of no spiritual service to himself, is compared, by FLAVEL, to the menial wet-nurse who is fed more from regard to the children than to herself; and Dr. HAWES compares such to Elijah's ravens, which carried wholesome food to the prophet, and fed on carrion themselves.

"Talents," says Mrs. HANNAH MORE, "are a fine thing, when they are not the best thing a man has; but when put in the balance with Christian principles, they kick the beam."

It is a fearful fact that some men could never have inflicted so much injury on the churches, nor have so greatly degraded their own characters, nor so much have deceived others, if they had not been *gifted* men. This is not an argument against the desirableness of such endow-

* See Num. xxiii. 10, and xxxi. 8.

ments, but it *is* a reason for not trusting in them.

To have been able to pray well with the lips, while the heart was estranged from God, must supply uncomfortable feelings in life, and a horrible addition to the sufferings of a lost soul.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet I shew unto you a more excellent way. 1 Cor. xii. 31.

Though I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

The hypocrite's hope shall perish, whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be as a spider's web: he shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure. Job, viii. 13—15.

When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Isaiah, i. 15.

The Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their hearts far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, a marvellous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. Isaiah, xxix. 13, 14.

The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. John, iv. 23, 24.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Matt. vii. 21—23.

Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow. Isaiah, l. 11.

IX.—PRIVATE DEVOTION A PREPARATIVE FOR SOCIAL AND PUBLIC PRAYER.

God will have us respect every one of his commandments, and for the allowed neglect of a duty may justly blast all our endeavours. — LAVINGTON.

THEY who would excel in public prayer, ought, on all accounts, to be much accustomed to private devotion.

It is not common for persons to attempt *other* engagements before the public, without previously pursuing them in retirement.

A distressing proof of insincerity is given by the man who *only* cares to speak with God in the presence of his fellow men.

It is a direct and flagrant violation of the commandment of Christ, to neglect worship in the closet.

Private devotion habituates the mind to all the hallowed considerations, and to many of the actual expressions of public prayer.

The comforts of excitement, in leading the worship of others, may be justly distrusted, if a similar interest be not sometimes felt in the duties of the closet.

The neglect of private prayer is likely to be succeeded by a barrenness of the soul, for which no justness of conception, no elegance of expression, no artificial energy, can compensate a spiritual mind. Nor can this duty be sacrificed without the loss of an interest in that promise with which the Redeemer has connected it.

Success in public prayer may result from the blessing of God implored in private.

"If thou wouldst have God's company in any ordinance, thou must wait on him in all; he will not have any willingly neglected. O fetch back that duty which thou hast sent away; though least in thy eyes, yet it may be it is that God means to crown with his choicest blessing to thy soul."*

The *distinct utterance of words*, in private devotion, will tend to fix the attention of the mind, and thus promote an immediate design of the

* Gurnall.

sacred employment. By habituating the mind to the act of communing with God — by familiarizing the speaker to the sound of his own voice in prayer—by aiding distinctness of conception—by promoting that power of utterance which almost invariably increases with exercise — and by its insensible influence in suggesting the topics of devotion, it will also tend to remove many of the causes of embarrassment in the more public duty.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

But when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. Exodus, xxxiv. 34, 35.

David said, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear [in private], he will surely deliver me out of the hand of the Philistine, [in public.] 1 Sam. xvii. 37.

David, the shepherd's boy, had probably used a sling and a stone for other purposes, before he employed them against Goliath. He mentioned as a reason for rejecting Saul's armour, *I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them.* 1 Sam. xvii. 39.

There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets. Dan. ii. 28.

But thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which

is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. Matt. vi. 6.

I cried unto the Lord, with my voice, and he heard me, out of his holy hill. Ps. iii. 4.

He shall hear my voice. Ps. lv. 17.

X.—EJACULATORY AND MENTAL PRAYER.

It will be good to send up *Ejaculatory Prayers* and *Praises* unto God.—GOUGE.

THE frequent lifting of the heart to God, and the utterance of brief but fervent prayers, amidst the common duties of life, are practices which so directly tend to the enjoyment of the "more excellent" blessings of the covenant of grace, that in mentioning the advantages resulting from such engagements, it would hardly seem important to urge their tendency to improve the gift of prayer. Indeed, if that gift be desired but on its own account, and without reference to the holy purposes to which it may be made subservient, to regard its improvement as an inducement to ejaculatory prayer, would be to act under the influence of an unworthy motive.

Yet, if the neglect of *one* duty be the reason why we do not and cannot excel in the performance of *another*, it must be important to amend our ways in reference to the first, that they may also

Constant lifting of the heart in Prayer
Mental Prayer

be improved where the latter is concerned. It may, therefore, occur to some reader, that if he were more constantly in the act of *mental* prayer, he would soon be able to pray more readily in words, and before his fellow-men. One way in which those who "ask in secret" are "rewarded openly" is, in the increase of their gifts upon public occasions: one way in which habitual neglecters of God are visited for their sin is, the difficulty they find when invited to engage with others in the *strange work* of prayer.

What a man is accustomed to say repeatedly in the action of his mind will become proportionately easy for the utterance of his tongue. To think clearly is nature's own preparative for speaking so as to be understood; and the powers of the mind, like those of the body, if in a moderately healthy state, will always improve by exercise. A believer, who lives in the spirit of prayer all the day, is not likely to be unable to worship with his family at night; at all events, his inability would not be of long continuance; —unless, indeed, some natural infirmity, against which no moral means can be expected to prevail, should be the real occasion of his imperfection.

"There is a habit of devotion," says Dr. BLAIR, "in occasional elevations of the soul towards God, which highly deserves to be cultivated, a thousand occurrences which happen

when we are engaged in the affairs of the world, and a thousand objects which present themselves to our view in the earth and the heavens when we are solitary and alone, may suggest matter of devout ejaculation towards God. By cherishing such a habit, we preserve on our minds the native spirit of prayer. In this sense I understand the injunction given, to pray without ceasing."

"A golden thread of heart-prayer," says Rev. MATTHEW HENRY, "must run through the whole of the Christian life; we must be frequently addressing ourselves to God in short and sudden ejaculations, by which we must keep up our communion with God in providences and common actions, as well as ordinances and religious services. Thus prayer must be *sparsim* (a sprinkling of it) in every duty, and our eyes must be ever towards the Lord."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. 1 Sam. i. 13. . . . . And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord; mine horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies, &c. 1 Sam. ii. 1 to 10.

No thought can be withholden from thee. Job, xlii. 1. . . . . My servant Job shall pray for you. Job, xlii. 9.

The Lord understandeth all the imagination of the thoughts: if thou seek him he will be found of thee. 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

While I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue. Ps. xxxix. 3.

The writer of so many Psalms said, In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul. Psalm xciv. 19.

XI.—THE EFFORT.

Who does the best his circumstance allows,
Does well, acts nobly—angels could no more.—YOUNG.

THE time when and the place where a man for the first time offers heartfelt prayer to God are likely to be remembered to the latest day of his life on earth;—perhaps they may not be forgotten in heaven. The little circle in which we first attempted to conduct religious worship may supply topics of profitable reflection, when time, and circumstances, and death, shall have produced their accustomed changes. Yet many Christians remember what lingerings, fears, wishes, distrusts, and procrastinations, preceded their early endeavours in this way. If this book should fall into the hands of one in so timid and anxious a state, may he be enabled to take encouragement! to make the effort! and to remember that he is not the first who has been thus alarmed.

It is often easier to perform a duty than to apologize for neglecting it.

It is better to have fulfilled a duty but imperfectly, than to have declined an attempt to accomplish it. Even a failure in the effort to do what is right should be preferred to cowardly and sluggish neglect.

No one expects a beginner to pray with as much facility, or wisdom, as an established Christian. "Candour," says NEWTON, "will always allow much for inexperience."

The first attempt to pray in company would not often appear so formidable, if it were remembered that it is not necessary for the young Christian (nor always desirable for older ones) to pray long. What if the prayer should not employ more than five minutes?—several of the psalms might be deliberately repeated in less time. Who could complain if the first act of verbal devotion were brief as that of the publican? or, in length, in temper, and in phraseology, like the hundred and thirty-first Psalm?

A man rarely knows what he can accomplish, until he makes a trial, and very many trials should be made before any one concludes that it is impossible for him to pray.

The SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS say—"In his duties, especially in religion, a man's spirit should be like water flowing down the shallow channel of a brook; which though it meets with

stones, and sticks, and innumerable obstructions in its course, continues to ripple and wind, and insinuate itself, perseveringly, through every opening, till it has left them all behind; when deep and broad, at length, it runs into the sea."*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily, I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all she had, even all her living. Mark, xii. 42, 44.

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God . . . . . If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth. 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11.

To them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life. Rom. ii. 7.

XII.—PROCRASTINATION.

Make the most of your minute.—AURELIUS.

THE attempt to pray without a form seldom becomes less difficult by the delay of an effort to

* Tyerman and Bennet's Journal, vol. i. p. 305.—This is, I believe, the first quotation from Polynesian authority. Blessed be the God who has honoured missions for this new source of spiritual illustration.—ED.

accomplish it; and no advantage can result from long intervals between the periods of engagement.

The Christian who begins with the short and simple petition of the publican, and allows his prayers to "grow with his growth, and strengthen with his strength," is likely to make far more rapid advances than those who lose, by procrastination, all the advantages of early impression, and of habitual exercise from the earliest infancy of grace in their souls. It is not often that such efforts are, first of all, necessary in public; but there are few exceptions to the general rule "delays are dangerous," so far as the closet and the family are concerned.

A man who feels his need of prayer *to-day* is not likely to be better qualified by delay for the attempt *to-morrow*.

Life is wasted, a day—or rather a moment—at a time.

Neither wicked men, nor wicked children, delay to employ their tongues in the service of Satan.

"Procrastination is the thief of time."

"To-morrow is in the *fool's* calendar."

The Christian who begins to pray in his own words to-day will probably pray the better to-morrow for his previous exercise.

Rust corrodes more than common service, and the moth hurts a garment more than six days' wear.

"There are no hours when God cannot be spoken with."*

"They that do the will of God heartily will do it speedily."*

They worship best in heaven, where they are always worshipping.

If the cross of the Christian *should* be taken up to-day, it may become heavier if left till to-morrow.

There are some duties which, if delayed, become increasingly difficult every day—if attempted, increasingly easy at every effort.

Why should a man defer his happiness?

"It is never too late to *begin;* it is always too late to delay."†

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits. Ex. xxii. 29.

I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments. Psalm cxix. 60.

Boast not thyself of to-morrow. Prov. xxvii. 1.

Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thine heart all the days of thy life. Deut. iv. 9.

* Henry. † Mrs. H. More.

XIII.—FORMS OF PRAYER.

We are far from deprecating forms of prayer in all cases; they have their uses, and even their excellences too. But it is impossible to frame a form of prayer to meet every new and pressing occurrence.—JAY.

THE New Testament suggests ideas as much at variance with a haughty disregard of the aids which may really be conveyed by forms of prayer, as with the employment of constraint in enforcing their use. The latter is an infringement on Christian liberty, and sometimes an unnatural effort to make babes speak like old men, or to induce old men to speak like babes; but the former results from prejudice, and may either render prayer almost impossible, or, in equal contrariety to the manner of nature, prevent that improvement which the best examples are always calculated to impart. A child would not be likely to attain becoming powers of speech by a rigid confinement to set phrases; neither would it be in more favourable circumstances if compelled to regard every expression used by its companions as forbidden language to itself. "Doth not even nature itself teach?"

When our Lord preached on the mount, he said "after this *manner* pray ye;" when, two years afterwards, a disciple asked to be taught

to pray, Christ replied, "when ye pray, *say*, Our Father, &c." Some divines have considered this sufficient evidence that either the *manner* or the *words* might be copied by the disciples; and it may be observed here, that while we have no positive proof that the disciples did use the precise form as given either in the sermon on the mount, or on the later occasion when it was somewhat altered, yet few can suppose that if they did use either, as a form, that they were violating the spirit of Christianity. If JESUS permitted the employment of either method, it does not become Christians to revile each other because of a preference for one or the other:—it does become them to profit by either, so far as it may be available in their particular cases.

The differing characteristics of different men render it expedient that persons who would excel in prayer—and indeed in any other exercise—should endeavour to understand their own minds, in order to a discovery of what is best *for them*.

Some have profited by employing a form, without confinement to all its parts, or limitation when they could advantageously enlarge; and not a few of these have, in the end, become well qualified for extempore prayer.

Others have composed forms for their own

use, freely employing the language of Scripture and of eminent Christians; and by providing new forms as their circumstances varied, or as they have proceeded in the Christian life, have ultimately acquired a readiness to express devotional sentiments, and in becoming order. He who composes his own forms of prayer, will, however, do well to write a new one *frequently*; this, if the mind be in a growing state—and it *should* always be growing—is a useful method of rendering *his* prayer a faithful representation of the actual state of his mind.

The employment of a form is sometimes succeeded by one disadvantage; for it may afterwards be almost as difficult to cast it aside, as in the first instance it would have been to pray without it. Let the young Christian, therefore, beware how he exclusively employs one more than is necessary. The crutch, if used for too long a period, may retard the strength of the member it was intended to relieve. In spiritual as in natural things, exercise is essential to strength, and he who never tries his power will rarely witness its increase. Many Christians have been induced by a species of accident to pray without a form, because they were for the first time placed in circumstances in which they *could not* use one; but it is a pity to leave to a

mere circumstance that which leads to so many advantages—if it be not in all cases an absolute duty.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit. And there are diversities of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 1 Cor. xii. 3.

If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not. 2 Cor. viii. 12.

They used helps. Acts, xxvii. 17.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but, when I became a man, I put away childish things. 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

XIV.—THE SUBJECTS OF PRAYER.

Our English word *Prayer* is too strait, that properly signifies petition or request; whereas humble adoration of God, and thanksgiving to him, are as necessary in prayer as any other part of it. — HENRY.

PROFITABLE devotion will be much promoted by a distinct understanding of the several parts of prayer, and of the various purposes to which divine worship is subservient.

Though it be a most melancholy proof of irreligion for any to pray *only when in trouble*, yet circumstances may occur in the life of every

man, and in the history of every religious body, in which *petition* may properly constitute the principal portion of an address to God; and it is a merciful word of the Most High which, under such circumstances, says "call upon me in the time of trouble, and I will hear thee." Yet petition itself will be aided and encouraged by most of the other parts of prayer. Even Psalm li. though so principally composed of supplications for mercy, will be found to include adoration, thanksgiving, confession, and pleading.

It is eminently proper, at some periods, that *praise*—including adoration, thanksgiving, and blessing—should constitute the prominent portion of the worship of God. Psalms viii., xi., xviii., xix., xxix., and lxv., are mostly of this character. Such also are those historical Psalms, in which it was obviously intended to praise God for his dealings with Israel. In Psalm ciii. we do not find a petition.

There are seasons, also, when *lamentation* and *confession* may profitably employ almost the whole of a prayer. It is difficult—and, perhaps, not desirable—to find a Psalm *exclusively* of this character, but Psalm xxxviii. gives an affecting example of a sorrowful believer's worship.

Prayer, however, is *communion with God*, and

some expressions may occur, in such an act, which it would be difficult to arrange under either of the foregoing divisions; but considerable help, in the supply of appropriate subjects for sustaining this communion, may be gathered from the terms by which the act is defined in the sacred word. The reader will therefore do well to ponder on the expressions appended at the close of this volume,* and he may be assisted by making a note of similar expressions whenever they occur in his daily reading of the Bible.

Dr. WATTS—who divides prayer into the several heads of invocation, adoration, confession, petition, pleading, self-dedication, thanksgiving, blessing, and the amen—has supplied the following lines, which it may be profitable for all young Christians to commit to memory:—

> "Call upon God, adore, confess,
> Petition, plead, and then declare
> You are the Lord's, give thanks and bless,
> And let Amen conclude the prayer."

Though it is not certain that the Lord's prayer was ever used in the public worship of the first Christians; though that prayer contains *one* supplication which, in its *primary* intention,

* *See* Appendix (A), entitled, "Terms and Expressions employed in Holy Scripture to describe or characterize the Act of Prayer to God."

seems to have been peculiarly intended to precede the perfect introduction of the kingdom of Christ upon the earth; though it does not, in so many words, embody the Christian's great plea —the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; and though for these reasons some good men do not see the necessity of employing it in every act of Christian worship; yet all agree that it may, even now, be of admirable use in suggesting the topics and the order of prayer. While the prayers of the son of Jesse, and of other inspired saints, are regarded as models, and proper for quotation, it would, indeed, be a strange infatuation which should deprive the Christian church of the benefits afforded by the actual teachings of JESUS! The Lord's prayer gives the most beautiful examples of every kind of address to God—so far, at least, as was desirable at the period of its dictation, when the great Christian sacrifice was only waiting to be offered, and the glorious High Priest was yet standing without.

As a distinct attempt to sketch the several parts of prayer will be found at the end of this volume,* the present section may be profitably closed by a notice of the comprehensive character of the Lord's prayer.

* See Appendix (B), at the end.

INVOCATION.—*Our Father which art in heaven.*

ADORATION.—*Hallowed be thy name.*

PETITION.—For the advancement of the kingdom of God, *Thy kingdom come*:—for the purity of the church and the world, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven:*—for temporal supplies, *Give us this day our daily bread:*—for the pardon of sins, *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us:*—for preservation from the world, the flesh, and the devil, *Lead us not into temptation:*—for deliverance from ills of every kind, *But deliver us from evil.*

PLEADING.—*For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.*

The fourth *petition* implies *confession;* the *pleading* is also matter of *thanksgiving* and *blessing;* the whole is conducted on the principle of *self-dedication;* it concludes with *amen;* and may therefore be said to contain every part of prayer to which the mnemonic lines of Dr. Watts refer. A strong recommendation of the Doctor's verse.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Praying always with all prayer. Eph. vi. 18.

I exhort therefore, that, first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men. 1 Tim. ii. 1.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, comfort your hearts, and establish you in *every* good word and work. 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17.

XV.—FREQUENT CONTEMPLATION OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD ESSENTIAL TO SCRIPTURAL PRAYER.

You have chosen and judged well, how to conceive of the Deity in our prayers, in our meditations, is both the deepest point of all Christianity, and the most necessary: so deep, that if we wade into it, we may easily drown, never find the bottom; so necessary, that without it, ourselves, our services are profane, irreligious. — BISHOP HALL.

THE study of the nature and attributes of God is an essential preparation for divine worship; and there is no part of prayer for which this preparation is unnecessary.

A man will never invoke, or call upon the name of God, with the reverence, the solemnity, the confidence, the humiliation, the fear, the hope, and the love, which so impressive an exercise demands, unless he have devoutly thought on the characters under which it has pleased Jehovah to reveal himself to men. The very reverence which is felt in a religious service, if it be not founded on a knowledge of the character of God, is nearly allied to the superstitious awe of the heathen in approaching their idols.

In order to devout *adoration*, it is essential that the soul should have some knowledge of the God whom it professes to adore.

We only know *our sins*, in all their awful characteristics, in proportion as we know God; and if we even knew them, it is not likely we should

properly *confess* them to a God whom we did not know.

Without knowing God, how can any one tell whether he asks too little or too much? How, in such a case, can he know whether he asks what is agreeable or otherwise? It is not possible, without the study of the Divine character, to conduct aright the business of *petition*.

Pleading cannot be well conducted without an acquaintance with those attributes of God which constitute the foundations of its more important parts.

Who could *dedicate himself* to a Being of whom he knew nothing? or of whom, though he had every opportunity to learn, he had not even taken the pains to study his names, his attributes, or his works? The apostle called the Athenians "too superstitious," when they "ignorantly worshipped an unknown god."

It is not easy for any man to say on what occasions he has reason to employ *thanksgiving*, if he do not even know the character or works of Him to whom he professes to be obliged.

A person cannot scripturally be said to *bless* God, without being the subject of some emotions which depend on a knowledge of the Almighty.

The *amen* derives much of its importance from

what has preceded it in prayer; he, therefore, who has not the knowledge of God which is important to every other part of the worship, is not properly prepared for that in which the whole is summed up.

Repentance, faith, hope, love, and every other Christian grace essential to becoming prayer, have an intimate connexion with, and are greatly dependent on, a scriptural knowledge of the character of God.

Every revealed attribute of Jehovah has some immediate connexion with the act of prayer.

We more suitably address even a fellow-creature, when we have some knowledge of his personal character; and in proportion as that fellow-creature is like what we know of GOD, is the importance of such knowledge in every solicitation for his favour.

However well men pray in ordinary seasons, they always pray better when they are enabled unusually to realize the most just conceptions of the Holy One whom they worship.

A clear *head* is all that is essential to some studies, but the knowledge of God is not obtained without a further preparative;—a renewed *heart* is essential to its attainment, and this renewed heart is given by Himself.

Though it be impossible, by mere "searching" to "find out God;" or by any other means "to find out the Almighty unto perfection;" yet it is not impossible for a prayerful mind to learn enough of Jehovah from the Scriptures, and especially from the New Testament, to answer all the purposes of religious worship upon earth—"The only begotten of the Father, *He* hath declared Him."

A spiritual mind may derive much edification, and a preparedness for worship, in prayerful meditation on the *names* by which it has pleased the Most High to reveal himself to man;* but no one knows how much an acquaintance with God will help him in prayer, until he has well studied that scripture, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing trespasses unto them."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame. 1 Cor. xv. 34.

He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Heb ii. 6.

No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. John, i. 18.

No man knoweth who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. Luke, x. 22.

This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only

* See the close of this volume.

true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. John, xvii. 3.

The knowledge of the Holy is understanding. Prov. ix. 10.

I uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me which I knew not . . . . . I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. Job, xiii. 3, 5, 6.

To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word. Is. lxvi. 2.

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. 2 Peter, i. 2.

The people that do know their God shall be strong; and do exploits. Daniel, xi. 32.

The Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and do sacrifice. Isaiah, ix. 21.

They shall call upon me, and I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me, for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. Prov. i. 28, 29.

As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind. Rom. i. 28.

The Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land; because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. Hos. iv. 1.

The sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord. 1 Samuel, ii. 22.

They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee. Psalm ix. 10.

I will give them a heart to know me. Jer. xxiv. 7.

XVI.—THE PROMISES:—THEIR INFLUENCE ON PRAYER.

A good heart will aske nothing but what God hath promised.
REV. T. TAYLOR.

"THIS," says the beloved disciple, "is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." Some prayers are heard, (i. e. complacently received,) which for reasons as much affecting the welfare of the suppliant as the glory of his God, cannot be literally or directly answered; but it is the privilege of a well-instructed mind, to be preserved from the utterance of petitions in themselves offensive to the Almighty.

The promises of God not only relate to various subjects, but in their very nature imply extremely different degrees of obligation to their fulfilment. The promises of Christ's incarnation, of his second coming, and of spiritual and eternal blessings to those who walk after the Spirit, are absolute. The promises of health, earthly prosperity, deliverance from enemies, or from affliction, and some other blessings, are either conditional, or intended to apply but for a limited period.

It is ever important, in contemplating the promises of God, to remember that Jehovah is not pledged to the fulfilment of any one, at the

expense of the failure of others of more importance; it is not, for instance, to be regarded as a non-fulfilment of the promise "with long life will I satisfy him," when it pleases God to take a youthful saint to dwell with Him in heaven.

An affectionate child will be anxious not even to ask for what is known to be contrary to a father's will; and as the Lord has made no promises of things in themselves unlawful, it will greatly help the prayers of a child of God, if he can obtain an enlarged, correct, and discriminating view of the promises of scripture. If the prayer be not literally answered, we may be sure that we do not offend God by asking such things as He has declared his readiness to bestow.

One of the most affecting obstacles to becoming prayer is that ignorance of our own necessities, in consequence of which "we know not what we should pray for as we ought;" but in those cases in which it has pleased God to mention what He will give, we can be at no loss to perceive what it becomes us to ask. It is profitable to trace the numerous instances in which the subjects of promise are also made the subjects of prayer in the sacred writings.

The promises of God derive much of their value from His character and attributes;—our interest in most, if not all of them, depends on

our relationship to Jesus Christ: all the promises of God "in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

The Lord God of your fathers bless you as he hath promised you! Deut. i. 11.

There is no God like thee in the heaven, nor in the earth; which has kept with thy servant David, my father, that which thou hast promised him; and spakest with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thy hand, as it is this day. Now therefore, O Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him. . . . . Now then, O Lord God of Israel, let thy word be verified, &c. 2 Chron. vi. 15, 17.

Being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. Rom. iv. 21.

I will not leave thee. Gen. xxviii. 15. . . . . Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. Psalm xxvii. 9.

He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. Isaiah, xl. 29. . . . . For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, by his Spirit in the inner man. Eph. iii. 14, 16.

I am the Lord thy Redeemer, which teacheth thee to profit: which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldst go. Isaiah, xlviii. 17. . . . . Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path. Psalm xxvii. 11.

I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not. Isaiah, xlii. 16. . . . . Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of thy law. I am a stranger in the earth. Psalm cxix. 18, 19.

He shall preserve thy soul. Psalm cxxi. 8. ..... Preserve my soul. Psalm lxxxvi. 2.

He also will hear their cry, and will save them. Psalm cxlv. 19. ..... Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. Psalm lxxxvi. 6.

He will bless them that fear the Lord. Psalm cxv. 13. ....God....bless us. Psalm lxvii. 1.

I will pour my spirit upon thy seed. Isaiah, xliv. 3..... How much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? Luke, xi. 13.

Put me in remembrance. Isaiah, xliii. 26. ..... Remember me, O my God. Neh. xiii. 14.

The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you and keep you from evil. 2 Thess. iii. 3. ..... I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thess. v. 23.

Turn ye to the strong holds, ye prisoners of hope. Zech. ix. 12. ..... Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock, and my fortress. Psalm lxxi. 3.

And I will make them, and the places round about my hill a blessing. Ezek. xxxiv. 26. ..... God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us. Selah. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Psalm lxvii. 1.

Augustine traces a connexion between seven of the beatitudes, and seven requests in the Lord's prayer. See Matt. v. and vi.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand; my Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands. John, x. 27, 29. ..... Holy Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me. ..... I pray that thou wouldst keep them from the evil. John, xvii. 11, 15.

Behold I come quickly. Rev. xxii. 12. ..... Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Rev. xxii. 20.

XVII. — PRAYER IN CONNEXION WITH THE PRECEPTS.

We make all our addresses to the *promises*, hug and caress them, and in the interim let the *commands* stand by neglected.
DECAY OF PIETY.

THOUGH we must not be satisfied with prayer alone, when God has enjoined other practical duties, it is well to remember that scripture precepts generally relate to subjects on which prayer has been offered by "holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

It is as great a privilege to be enabled to perform a duty as to enjoy a comfort. The advantages resulting from obedience are, in some cases, even greater than those which accrue from enjoyment; while in others "to enjoy is to obey."

We should obtain strength for the performance of Christian duty, if we prayed earnestly for the grace which is essential to its performance. In this, as in other respects, we "have not because we ask not."

Saints in glory may wonder at the anxieties they have wasted on some of the inferior topics of supplication while on earth. There never can arrive an era — even in eternity — when prayer for ability to accomplish the enjoined will of God, shall appear to have been unimportant.

"It is better to obey," said LUTHER, "than to work miracles;"—the former is not therefore a less important subject of prayer than those kinds of service which even in the days of Christ "went forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting."

Grace to enable the believer to fulfil the injunctions of the written word, is included in the "many, great, and precious promises, whereby he is made a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through the lust." Here we are at once reminded of the connexion between prayer, the promises, and the precepts.

Our Lord taught his disciples to pray, "Thy will be done on earth even as it is done in heaven;"—but there is no more obvious revelation of the Divine mind than that "this is the will of God, even your sanctification."

To pray for holiness is to pray for the fulfilment of God's design in all his purposes of grace.

His salvation is a holy salvation—His Son a holy Saviour—His Gospel a holy Gospel—The election of grace an election to holiness—Regeneration a holy birth—God's calling a holy calling — His people a holy people — Their ministering spirits holy angels—His Spirit the Holy Spirit—His heaven a holy abode—Its services holy duty—and its pleasures holy pleasures.

Paul prayed that others might be practically holy; but the gospel does not require us to love others *better* than ourselves. — Therefore we should pray that *we* may be holy.

To turn to God is a *duty*—but Israel prayed for restoring grace.

Repentance is a duty, but Christ is exalted a prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins.

Faith is a duty, but Christ is the author and finisher of faith, and the apostles said unto the Lord, "increase our faith."

Love to God is a duty, but Paul *prayed* that it might increase among the churches.

Hope is a duty, which inspired men have been taught to enjoin upon their own souls; yet the same class of men would cry "let me not be ashamed of my hope."

Christians are commanded to be *enlarged*, yet

they may say, "I will run the way of thy commandments when thou hast enlarged my heart."

The righteous are bidden to *rejoice*, but they are also allowed to cry, "Rejoice the soul of thy servant."

While fulfilling the command to "search the Scriptures," we read "open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

We ought to "love the brethren," but we may pray that our "love may abound yet more and more."

Believers must be "patient till the coming of the Lord," and they are encouraged to approach the "God of patience," as a means of fulfilling this duty.

They must "bear one another's burdens," while they "cast their burdens on the Lord."

They should "watch," but in their vigils they may cry, "The shepherd of Israel! he never sleeps; the shepherd of Israel! he never slumbers."

They should produce the fruits of piety, but the apostle prays (2 Cor. ix. 10) "that God may increase the fruits of your righteousness."

"We count those happy which endure;" but they most effectually persevere, while in prayer they "endure as seeing Him who is invisible."

"NOAH walked with God, and FOUND grace in the eyes of the Lord, before he built an ark to the saving of his house."

ABRAHAM, "the father of the faithful," was ever, on his different removals, "building an altar unto the Lord."

JACOB in an early stage of his obedience cried, "If the Lord will be with me," and he became qualified to meet his brother by "wrestling with God."

MOSES, the active servant of God and leader of Israel, was a man of prayer, and succeeded more readily against AMALEK, and on some other occasions, by prayer than by any other means.

Before Joshua would lead the people over Jordan, he said, "Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you."

SAMUEL "ministered before the Lord being a child," and therefore before any of his mighty enterprises in the service of God, and of Israel.

DAVID met GOLIATH "in the name of the living God."

The wisdom of SOLOMON was given in answer to prayer.

ELIJAH conquered the idolatrous priests by looking to heaven for fire.

HEZEKIAH vanquished the army of SENNA-

CHERIB after offering humble and earnest supplication to God.

NEHEMIAH prepared to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem by "weeping and mourning certain days;" by "fasting and praying before the God of Heaven."

JOB did not sustain his afflictions without prayer.

Communion with God prepared ISAIAH, JEREMIAH, and EZEKIEL to write books of prophecy.

DANIEL became qualified for his important duties, and his faith-trying sufferings, by "praying three times a day as was his custom."

JONAH accomplished his work after praying out of what he affectingly called "the belly of hell," better than after "sleeping in the sides of the ship."

When the Lord told the APOSTLES they should be "his witnesses unto the uttermost parts of the earth," they returned to Jerusalem, and held a perpetual prayer-meeting till they should be "endued with power from on high."

JESUS, when about to become "obedient unto death," "went away and prayed three times."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. Ps. lxviii. 28.

Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning. Rom. xv. 4.

Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it. Luke, xi. 28.

Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably. Heb. xii. 28 . . . . . Ye have not, because ye ask not. Heb. iv. 2.

When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. Jer. xxxi. 33.

The Grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. Titus, ii. 11, 12.

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Phil. iv. 13.

He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk as he also walked. 1 John, ii. 6.

XVIII. — THE INFLUENCE OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE ON PRAYER.

Next to the knowledge of God, this knowledge of ourselves seems most worthy of our endeavour.—HALE.

THE knowledge of ourselves is, at least, as important in prayer as in any other exercise; and it is commonly admitted that

—— "all knowledge centres here."

With the Gospel of Christ before him, a man may *dare* to endeavour to know himself. "I thought thus—there is a remedy to be had, let things be as bad as bad can be; there is a physi-

cian, and many promises of pardon and assistance. Whence I concluded that I might safely venture to know the worst of myself."*

A man, who does not know himself, is likely to be mistaken if he suppose that he knows the Most High God.

A man who does not, in some considerable measure, know himself, is incapable of proper confession, petition, thanksgiving, or blessing. The want of self-knowledge was a prominent defect in the pharisee, the influence of it an evidence of a prepared heart in the publican, mentioned by our Lord.

Self-examination is a part of Christian duty; but self-examination is chiefly productive of valuable effects as it tends to the increase of self-knowledge, and, through this, to the other graces of the man of God.

Without self-knowledge, it is impossible to ascertain whether some of the promises of God are made to *us;* yet the promise is the life of prayer.

No man comes to Christ until he knows something of his own imperfection; it is coming to Christ which prepares the soul for acceptable worship.

The more perfectly a man knows himself, the

* Mr. Thomas Cole.

more decidedly will he be sensible that he requires the blessings which only God can bestow; and therefore, the more ardently will he pray. "It is now twenty-three years," said good Mr. Joss, "since I was awakened to know the work of God upon my heart: and I feel my need of Christ more deeply at the end of those three and twenty years than I even did when I was first drawn to him."

The knowledge of our own hearts, is a key to the knowledge of the hearts of other men; and consequently a preparative to conduct *their* devotions.

Some degree of self-knowledge is essential to prayer, yet prayer is the well-tried means of increasing self-knowledge.

It is the more important that the knowledge of ourselves should be a subject of continual study, because there is no kind of knowledge which an unstable mind is in greater danger of forgetting.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands to this house, then hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, &c. 1 Kings, viii. 38, 39.

Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ? John, iv. 29.

Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith. 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, *deceiving his own heart*, that man's religion is vain. James, i. 26.

Let no man deceive himself. 1 Cor. iii. 18.

God left Hezekiah, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart. 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.

They that seek the Lord understand all things. Prov. xxviii. 5.

As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man. Prov. xxvii. 19.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24.

He beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. James, i. 24.

XIX. — ON FAITH, IN CONNEXION WITH PRAYER.

Prayer is a key, which, being turned by the hand of faith, unlocks all God's treasures. — CRIPPLEGATE LECTURES.

FAITH is a principle of so much importance in its influence on every other part of Christian character and habits, that its essential effects on worship might be almost presupposed. Prayer is faith in exercise.

Faith is the foundation principle, the leading grace of the man of God—to which "virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, and brotherly kindness," are to be *added*.

God has not promised to hear the prayer of an unbeliever.

Christ did not many mighty works in his own country, because of their unbelief.

Even the word of God, to man, "did not profit" some, "not being mixed with faith in them that heard it;" it is not, therefore, surprising that man's words, before God, require the exercise of faith, in order to their acceptance.

The first design of prayer fails, if worship be not accompanied by faith.

It is unseemly to insult even a fellow-creature, by a want of confidence, in the very act of asking a favour.

A man who attempts to perform a known impossibility, displays at once his weakness and his folly. To please God without faith, is *impossible*.

Common credence is an act of the judgment, but faith in Christ requires the concurrence of the heart, for "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness;"* To approach God without faith is, therefore, to attempt to worship with an unprepared heart. It is, nevertheless, remarkable, and it may encourage a mind which seeks the Divine influence, in a very low state of grace, that the faith essential to the act of

* See Rom. x. 10.

"coming to God" is simply a belief that "He is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." These truths are, however, never so appropriately received as when they are founded on those gospel doctrines which constitute their most stable basis.

Unbelief attempts to cast a reflection on the Christ of God, *as if* he who is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," while "upholding all things by the word of his power," could not be trusted "by himself" to "purge our sins."

God has done so much to encourage a penitent sinner to believe in him, that the absence of faith is extreme ingratitude—a disposition which is more to be lamented in the hour of supplication than at any other time.

There may, however, be faith where there is "little faith;" and a weak believer, conscious of his imperfection, is allowed to implore its increase:—"say, *Lord, I believe*, and I will give you leave still to add—*help thou mine unbelief.*"*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Heb. xi. 6.

O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. Matt. xv. 28.

* Bishop Hall.

In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence by the faith of him. Eph. iii. 12.

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. James, i. 6, 7.

For whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Rom. xiv. 23.

And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Matt. xxi. 22.

And he marvelled, because of their unbelief. Mark, vi. 6.

And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. Luke, xvii. 5.

And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. Mark, ix. 24.

XX.—OF THE STATE OF THE HEART, & THE INFLUENCE OF THE UNDERSTANDING IN PRAYER.

Prayer is rather the language of the heart than of the understanding; but if the heart will not pray, the understanding must.
DR. PAYSON.

THE emotions of a heart in a spiritual frame will impart the melody of nature to the tones; they have often given birth to the purest eloquence in prayer, where nothing was less contemplated by the suppliant than such a consequence.

The dictates of a renewed understanding recalling a sluggish heart to its duty have some-

times been the sanctified means of awakening the emotions of the soul.

The heart is not always *dead* when it is *slumbering*.

The understandings of good men are so often aided in the act of prayer, by the awakening energies of the heart, that we might expect that the debt should be sometimes repaid ;—it *is* repaid when the efforts of the judgment become the means of exciting and encouraging the affections in worship.

Many of the Psalms begin sorrowfully, yet end joyfully ; and Christians who have begun to pray with reluctance, because of the apathy of their affections, have ended with reluctance because of their joys in the exercise.

It is a good sign when a man is determined to endeavour to pray whether he find comfort in the exercise or not. It may be harder work for the understanding to drag the heart to prayer, than for the heart to inspire the understanding ; but the one is, in some cases, hardly less a sign of grace than the other.

" When you see the bee," says BURROUGHS, " fluttering about the flower, and observe that it will not, by any means, be driven from it, you may be sure it has found honey there."

If the understanding can help to bring the

heart up to the performance of its duty in this world, it will not have that trouble in the next.

The heart of a renewed man will soon *repay* the understanding when it *is* awakened.

If the understanding speak truth, it will tell the heart that it never has greater occasion to pray than when it is drowsily disposed.*

If the heart have been slumbering, the good Lord will permit it to pray when it is aroused, if it awake in the present world.

What is a man's understanding good for, if it do not teach him to pray ?

We should never have had some of the most profitable Psalms in Scripture, if the good men who were " moved" to utter them had waited till they were happy before they began to pray.

It is better that one part of man should perform its duty than that all should be asleep.

It is a pity that a tempted Christian should be ignorant of the Psalms of (or for) ASAPH.

When either the heart or the understanding is truly awakened, neither can be said to *enjoy* the drowsiness of the other.

" A person indisposed and lifeless, (on conviction of duty, in the way of obedience,) engaging in prayer, may, in and by the gift, have his affections excited, and graces engaged in

* See 1 Peter, i. 6, and compare with verse 17.

their proper work; it may be so, but let men take heed how they trust unto this method; for there may be little or nothing of the exercise of true grace in all their fervour and stir of affections; but when faith, love, holy reverence, and gracious desires, stir up the gift unto exercise, and call in its assistance, then is the mind in proper order."*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue. Psalm xxxix.

The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth. Prov. xvi. 23.

Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to God in the heavens. Lam. iii. 41.

And while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. Matt. xxv. 5.

When my soul fainted in me, I remembered the Lord. Jonah, ii. 7.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art tho disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, for the help of his countenance. Ps. xlii. 5.

And the disciples said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. Luke, xvii. 5.

If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: He cannot deny himself. 2 Tim. ii. 13.

I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night. I commune with mine

* Dr. Owen.

own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. Will the Lord cast off for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in his anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah. And I said, this is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. Ps. lxxvii. 12.

Quicken us, and we will call on thy name. Ps. lxxx. 18.

Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. James, iii. 13.

Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness, through manifold temptations. . . . If ye call on the Father, &c. 1 Pet. i. 6, 17.

XXI. — ON MEDITATION BEFORE PRAYER.

I find it best to go from no kind of employment that busieth my head, and scattereth my thoughts, immediately to prayer, if I can avoid it. — LADY ELIZ. BROOKE.

WHETHER the order and expressions of a prayer be preconcerted, or otherwise, can make but a little difference in the importance of premeditation. Indeed, those who have least to depend on, so far as *memory* is concerned, are likely to require the greater preparation of the *heart*.

"Nothing can affect us but as it is in our thoughts."*

* Rev. W. Jay.

God sometimes visits and refreshes the minds of his people, at seasons when they have made little preparation for the privilege; but it does not follow that they should use no preparation when they design to "wait upon the Lord."

Thoughts of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;—of ourselves;—of the gospel;—of our mercies;—of our guilt;—of our necessities;—of our dependence;—of our duties;—of the Church of Christ;—of the labourers in God's vineyard;—of the afflicted;—of our country;—of men in general;—of heaven, earth, and hell;—of eternity; and many such subjects will occur to the mind of a contemplative Christian; and when indulged in the spirit of piety, will remarkably tend to prepare the mind for prayer.

Of all the subjects with which it is proper to occupy the mind, in preparation for prayer, scarcely any can be more necessary than that of the importance of attending, in the true spirit of devotion, to prayer itself. "Wrong not yourselves so far as to turn these serious exercises of religion into an idle divertisement. What a happiness were it, if, every time you come to his solemn worship, some of your strongest sins did receive a new wound, and some of your weakest graces a new strength."*

* Leighton.

The Hebrew word which signifies *to pray*, has also been rendered *to meditate*. "As prayer is our speech to God, so is each good meditation (according to BERNARD) God's speech to the heart: the heart must speak to God, that God may speak to it. Prayer, therefore, and meditation, are as those famous twins in the story, or as two loving turtles, whereof separate one, the other languisheth. Prayer maketh way for meditation. Meditation giveth matter, strength, and life to our prayer. By which, as all other things are sanctified to us, so we are sanctified to all holy things. This is as some royal eunuch to perfume and dress our souls, that they may be fit to converse with the King of Heaven."*

"From meditation go to prayer; indeed, a soul in meditation is on the way to prayer; that duty leads the Christian to this, and this brings help to that; when the Christian has done his utmost by meditation to excite his graces, and chase his spirit into some divine heat, he knows all this is but to lay the wood in order."†

"I should have thought mowers very idle people; but they work while they whet their scythes. Now, devotedness to God, whether it mows or whets the scythe, still goes on with the work."‡

* Bishop Hall. † Gurnall. ‡ Newton.

It is when the soul has been least employed in holy meditation, that an unexpected summons to prayer, or to lead the prayer of others, is most commonly distressing.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Know therefore this day, and consider it in thy heart, that the Lord he is God. Deut. iv. 39.

Serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you. 1 Sam. xii. 24.

If they shall bethink themselves, and make supplication, &c. 1 Kings, viii. 47.

Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. Psalm cvii. 43.

I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. Psalm cxix. 59.

While I was musing, the fire burned, then spake I with my tongue. Psalm xxxix. 3.

In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul. Psalm xciv. 19.

And Isaac went out to meditate. (*Margin*, to pray.) Gen. xxiv. 63.

The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth. Prov. xvi. 23.

Thou meetest....those that remember thee in thy ways. Isa. lxiv. 5.

XXII.—ON TIMIDITY.

Faith and Fear, though not good friends, are sometimes very near neighbours; yea, they often lodge in one house. — TOPLADY.

EXTREME timidity will paralyze the powers of the mind, and render a wise and virtuous man

less capable of a public exercise than others who are far below him both in understanding and religious feeling; but who are not troubled with such peculiarities. Among those who are otherwise well qualified for prayer, it is probable that a greater number are kept silent by timidity than by all the other considerations which may be supposed to produce such an effect. To remedy this is therefore a matter of extreme importance.

In mental as in physical maladies, nearly similar symptoms are produced by very different diseases; and it is the business of every prudent person, in each case, to investigate the *cause* of an inconvenience, and whether its removal would on the whole be advantageous, before he pronounces on the remedy which may be desirable.

When timidity in prayer arises from a conviction of the hallowed character of the employment, —from a consciousness of personal imperfection in the presence of God,—from the fear of uttering that which would be unbecoming in a religious exercise,—or from a holy dread of subsequent immorality,—it is a blessing and not an evil; it is a sign of spiritual life; and its removal is rather to be dreaded than its continuance. "Happy is the man that feareth always."

When timidity results from the moral consciousness of unrepented guilt, it should only be

removed by a remembrance of Him whose blood cleanseth from all sin.

The habit of thinking and speaking unkindly of others—especially if accompanied with ungenerous and pitiable mimicry—will of course (if the conscience be not seared) beget uncomfortable emotions when the critic must pray himself. They will do him good, if they lead him to repentance and reformation.

The prevalence of unbelief will engender fear, and then the Christian grace of faith in God, affords the only remedy.

A person may be rendered timid by the presence of those who have witnessed his imperfections, and by the consciousness that such cannot be expected to profit under any prayers which he may presume to offer. In such a case it will be profitable to endure the affliction as a merited chastisement, to seek reconciliation with God and his brother, and to endeavour to be more watchful in his future life, "that his prayers be not hindered."

The presence of persons whose judgment we respect may also produce timidity. Here it will be well to remember that though God is not angry with his people because "in lowliness of mind" they "esteem others better than themselves," yet it is morally wrong to esteem them

more than Him. Just conceptions and proper feelings concerning Jehovah are the best remedies against extreme anxiety about his creatures.

The dread of an uncircumcised Philistine will be well met, after the manner of David, by the remembrance that his utmost scorn and malice will certainly be employed in vain. 1 Samuel, xvii. 37.

It is natural to most men to feel the effect of being placed in unusual circumstances, especially if they involve important responsibilities; it is therefore not surprising that those who seldom engage in social prayer, or who perhaps are engaging for the first time, should feel the influence of timidity. If this, however, be the only cause, and it sometimes is so, the remedy is sure and easy. They must pray frequently.

Constitutional timidity is not a sin, for it is not a crime to be in imperfect health; but under such an infirmity it is delightful to remember that when the spirit of prayer is realized, even this will sometimes give way.* As in the case of the amiable Cowper, this infirmity is sometimes occasioned by the endurance of tyranny in early life, or by a train of unhappy circumstances, or by specific attacks of bodily disease:—"a brother

* See the book of Job, the Psalms of Asaph, and Rom. viii. 10.

or sister is not in bondage in such a case." God is not angry with his people for the trials they have endured; nor will he condemn them for those weaknesses which result from occurrences over which they had no control. They are in error who suppose that they have more personal religion, because they have more strength of nerve; and who contemn the natural weakness of their friends, while their own Christian principles are not perhaps so strong as those of the individuals whose timidity they despise. A timid Christian may happen to be an abiding Christian, and the hand which trembles in its hold of Christ may never let it go. The aspen leaf does not fall from the tree although it does tremble in the slightest breeze.* Wonders have been accomplished by

* THE ASPEN LEAF.

Populus tremula, LINN.

WHEN the wild winds were sleeping, or far, far away,
How the delicate aspen leaf bent on its spray!
And it seem'd like a thing unprepared for the gale,
With its footstalk so slender, its fabric so frail.

But the storm came at last, and the wild winds blew strong,
And they spared not, but raged both loudly and long;—
Yet the delicate aspen leaf clung to its spray,
And it firmly held on till the winds went their way.

There are aspen-leaf saints, too—of sensitive mould;
By the zephyr disturb'd, but by no wind controll'd;
Let the rudest and roughest blast fiercely come on,
They will cling to their Saviour till storms are all gone.

naturally timid men, for moral courage may exist in a person who is not distinguished by animal courage, and God can help "the feeble to become as David, and David as the Angel of the Lord."

"However, though a weeping state is a safe one, and not without its advantages; yet there is a still more excellent way. The diffident should be encouraged, but diffidence itself should not. Covet earnestly the best gifts. Aspire to the choicest attainments."*

"Should I be asked, What is the grand remedy against undue fear of every possible kind? I answer, in one word—"Communion with God."†

A Christian who *begins* to pray in an agitated state of mind may happen to *end* his devotions better than his more confident brother.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Serve the Lord with fear. Psalm ii. 11.

Fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth. Josh. xxiv. 14.

Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. Is. ii. 10.

And beginning to sink, he cried, Lord, save me. Matt. xiv. 30.

Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith. Mark, iv. 20.

* Toplady. † Ibid.

Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of Hosts. Jer. ii. 19.

Who among the sons of the mighty can be compared unto the Lord? Psalm lxxxix. 6.

The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe. Prov. xxiv. 25.

I have learned by experience. Gen. xxx. 27.

And I said, This is my infirmity, &c. Psalm lxxvii. 10, 11, 12.

The meek and timid Moses was helped to do more for Israel than any other man of his time. See Ex. iii. 11, 12—iv. 1, 10, 13—vi. 30, &c.

So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Heb. xiii. 6.

XXIII.—ON HESITATION AND EMBARRASSMENT IN PRAYER.

In attempting to remove stammering, while every attention should be paid to such means as medical and physical science will point out for the strengthening of the corporeal system, it is of the utmost importance to induce the persons afflicted with it to reason on the subject.—Dr. J. Watson.

It may not be generally desirable that inexperienced persons, or persons who are without an aptness for the exercise, should engage in a very public service; but in the event of its being an apparent duty for them to make the attempt

it is important, as in the case of timidity, to be acquainted with the cause of the inconvenience, that the proper remedy may be applied.

To men of a certain physical temperament, hesitation is natural; and to them any advice—except on the importance of endeavouring to get the heart affected in the service—would be more suitably offered by the physician, or by professors of the science of the voice, than by the divine.* It is, however, extremely interesting to observe the number of cases in which persons who hesitate in any other kind of speaking are entirely free from the impediment in prayer—at least when they can realize the presence of God, and the proper spirit of the exercise. The less such persons think about their infirmities, and the more they can think of the God whom they worship, the more they are likely to overcome the defect.

Embarrassment is sometimes occasioned by the

* Yet I must repeat the remark of an intelligent friend, who, though subject to this natural infirmity, has been able to render services at some thousands of prayer meetings. This friend states that he has often avoided embarrassment by storing his mind with a ready supply of *words of synonymous meaning*; and as the tendency to this kind of hesitation principally affects the pronunciation of words beginning with particular letters, he has easily evaded the difficulty by employing another phrase.

wandering of the thoughts. In this case, the heart is generally the sinner, and an additional motive is here supplied to "keep with all diligence" that "out of which are the issues of" the very "life" of prayer.

Hesitation, like timidity, of which it is, indeed, sometimes the offspring, may be occasioned by the unusual character of an exercise. Patience and perseverance are certain remedies here.

Embarrassment has been occasioned by the presence of persons whose criticisms were dreaded. An humble Christian *need not*, however, fear the criticisms of good men, and he *ought not* to cringe like a slave before the enemies of God. When the mind is disturbed on this particular subject, it is of special importance in the very commencement of the prayer to pay devout attention to the invocation and adoration of God. Even great men appear but little creatures, when the mind can realize the presence and the glory of Jehovah.

The frequent and attentive reading of good authors will prove an effective method of remedying the hesitation which arises from *want of words*. The amiable PEARCE used, in such a case, to recommend a perusal of the writings of Dr. WATTS.

Self-possession, if the heart be otherwise in a

prepared state, is half the secret of readiness in public prayer: every thing, therefore, which experience may suggest as calculated to aid the former is likely also to promote the latter.

The young prayer-leader will find great help in the matter of self-possession, by pursuing the same method in his public prayers which he is accustomed to follow in his private devotions. When maturity and habit have given the power to pray in either way, it may be profitable to alternate the premeditated with the entirely extemporary method; but it is a bold experiment to make the first attempt in public prayer the first attempt also in a new method of conducting the exercise. It may be natural for a young Christian to wish to pray better in public than in private; but the effort is not unlikely to defeat its own intention—especially if it be made in an unusual manner. It is not wonderful that persons who never premeditated the order of their private worship should in so many cases have admitted that after they had regularly arranged a prayer for the prayer-meeting "it all went away when they fell upon their knees!" A person, on the other hand, who has always prearranged his private worship would probably feel even more at a loss, should he attempt, for the first time, an entirely extemporary prayer in the

midst of a public assembly. An extraordinary measure of the spirit of prayer may, in either case, prevent the probable effects of such a change, but its natural tendency cannot be doubted.

It is possible to hesitate from mere habit, and, when this custom has long continued, it may be mistaken for a natural infirmity. "Use is second nature," and it may happen to be mistaken for nature itself. A friend, a teachable disposition, and a persevering mind, will be important helps to the conquest of any evil which results from habit.

It is not, however, impossible that the suspension of the comfortable communion of the Holy Spirit may be the method in which it sometimes pleases God to chastise the pride which has been generated by success. "If once, like Hezekiah, we call in spectators to see our treasures, and grow proud of our gifts, and comforts, then it is high time for God, if he loves us indeed, to send some messenger to carry them away from us, which carry our hearts away from Him."*

An irreverent repetition of the names of God, though there may be some reasons to fear it is the most common, is the worst of all expe-

* Gurnall.

dients to avoid hesitation in the midst of a prayer. It is much better to pause and reflect, if the thoughts do not flow readily, than to break the third commandment at the very footstool of mercy. The ancient scribes dipped their pens in pure water when they were about to write the sacred name; and authority has said, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." The kind pity of good men, and the unkind criticisms of the captious, are the chief inconveniences which are likely to result from unavoidable embarrassment, or from the extreme of deliberation; but even to *appear* to break a commandment and to violate the spirit of Christianity, are evils of a more awful character.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Let these also first be proved. 1 Tim. iii. 10.

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. Rom. viii. 26.

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things. Matt. xii. 35, and Luke, vi. 45.

When I was a child, &c. 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Is. xl. 23.

Let every man prove his own work. Gal. vi. 4.

Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head. Psalm cxli. 5.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Exodus, xx. 7.

Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him. Prov. xxx. 20.

Let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth. Ecclesiastes, v. 2.

XXIV.—PRAYER IN THE FAMILY.

He that intermits good duties incurs a double loss; of the blessing that followeth good; of the faculty of doing it.—Bishop Hall.

A man has little reason to suppose that he has *any* real religion, if he be not religious at home.

We are rarely too independent, too negligent, or too proud, to *receive* favours from God,—providential favours at least,—*why* should we be unwilling to *acknowledge* or to *solicit* them?

We need spiritual blessings at home as much as in the sanctuary. It is commonly admitted that in sickness and in death, piety is important to all; but where one person dies in the house of God, one hundred die in their own habitations. Strange that a reasonable creature should neglect prayer in the very place where he, and perhaps the family around him, are likely to die!

Every good man is anxious that his children should be holy and happy after he is gone.

How can this anxiety accord with the neglect of family prayer?

There is at least one solemn denunciation in Scripture against the "families that do not call on the name of God." See Jer. x. 25.

The presence of Christ in a family is likely to render it a happy family; and family prayer is one very important method of seeking the presence of Christ.

If family prayer, or bad tempers, must be relinquished, every Christian knows which he should try to part with.

Those who cannot find time to collect their families for prayer had better not allow them time to be sick or to die.

One frequently urged reason—or rather excuse—for the neglect of prayer, in the families of those who attend public worship, is the difficulty of conducting the exercise in such a way as to excite the continued interest and respect of the various members of the household; and to meet this difficulty is an object worthy of a vigorous and continued effort. A good form of prayer ought to be much preferred to a neglect of the duty; and there are, happily, now, so many good published forms, that a profitable

variety may be obtained for a length of time. To secure this variety, however, is a matter of considerable expense, which in many Christian families is really of consequence.* Even when the expense of different forms is a thing of no moment, it may happen, and indeed does happen, that other considerations may prevent the same degree of profit from any form, which is usually derived by the same persons from an extemporary prayer.

In connexion with reflections of this character, it is pleasing to remember that it is the tendency of family worship to improve the gifts, on which, in some degree, its interesting character may depend. It is sometimes, indeed, more difficult to commence the performance of spiritual duty in the presence of relations than in the society of others; but Christianity ever brings support in the performance of its own duties, and supplies adequate motives to excite obedience to its own precepts. "Patient continuance in well doing" will accomplish wonders.

* A much respected ministerial friend, referring, in a letter to the author, to the above observation, profitably suggests, that "where two, three, or more families use different forms of prayer, a greater variety, at no additional expense, might be secured by a periodical interchange of books."

Family prayer is not, however, a privilege which all young Christians can command, (though its introduction would often be less difficult than some of them may be tempted to suppose,) and even where it is established, it may not always be desirable that the heads of families should often relinquish their proper duties in favour of their younger relatives. Yet there are cases in which to the younger members of a family belongs the high honour of having introduced or revived the worship of God in the habitations of their parents. Happy and honoured youths! may they be "blessed in their deed!" may their numbers increase! may their conduct in the world do honour to their efforts at home! and may they be rendered still greater blessings in their day and generation!

When a young Christian has the privilege of conducting family worship, it can hardly fail to promote the growth of the power to pray. Supposing that worship to be performed morning and evening, it will of course occur *seven hundred and thirty times in the year*. It is next to impossible that a pious person should in five years, besides ejaculatory and closet worship, make *three thousand six hundred and fifty* attempts to pray with others, and at the end of that time be entirely incapable of the exercise.

Yet this is only an incidental benefit of family prayer. A secret about neglect at home is sometimes published when we cannot pray abroad.

The *sameness* in the circumstances of a family, in its ordinary state, is favourable to the employment of the gift of prayer in an early stage of its exercise; and the habit of varying the expression but a little every day may in the end lead to a more comprehensive power in the employment.

The generally desirable brevity of a family prayer is also in favour of the young Christian in this duty.

In a happy family, (and it is always difficult to maintain family worship in an unhappy one,) it may be expected that a very charitable feeling will exist towards that member who may commonly lead their devotions. What Christian parent does not wish to be pleased with the prayers of his child? what Christian brother does not desire to think well of his own relative?

The watchfulness which family prayer naturally tends to inspire in the person who must conduct the devotions of those with whom he lives, is at least so far favourable to the growth of his gifts, that it is likely to prevent them from

being checked by the withering influence of immorality in the life.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Let them learn first to shew piety at home. 1 Tim. v. 4.

The man who wrote the largest proportion of the prayers of Scripture said, Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice. Ps. lv. 17.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chambers towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, *as he did aforetime*. Dan. vi. 10, 11.

The Apostles and their company, when living together, as one family, continued with one accord in prayer and supplications. Acts, i. 14.

Cornelius received an increase of spiritual light, as the result of the Divine blessing on family prayer. Acts, x. 1, 2, &c.

I prayed in my house. Acts, x. 30.

Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name. Jer. x. 25.

XXV.—THE SICK CHAMBER.

The sick and the dying beds of Christ's people are, in a very eminent degree, schools of instruction and consolation. I have often gone to them as cold (spiritually speaking) as a stone, and returned from them half as warm as an angel. — TOPLADY.

THE sick and the distressed are, in some respects, the best persons with whom a Christian,

beginning to pray, can exercise his gifts. The earliest advances beyond the circle of the most intimate friendship may be profitably made in the chamber of affliction.

There is an eloquence in woe which affects the heart, and thus inspires the tongue; and when a man is praying only with the sorrowful, he is not likely to be surrounded with critics. A mind which deeply feels its need of mercy will not be fastidious about the expressions by which that mercy is implored,—provided only that there be a manifest sympathy with its wants, and such an agreement with the word of God as gives a reasonable expectation that prayer will be answered.

Next to the privilege of holding communion with God, and deriving personal blessings from his throne, there can hardly be a more becoming motive to desire the gift of prayer than the remembrance that such a gift may prove of service to a suffering fellow-creature; and there is scarcely another engagement so conducive to the actual growth of holy eloquence in devotion, as a frequent employment of the heart and tongue in sympathy with the distressed. We should, in general, pray better with the healthy and the prosperous, if we prayed more frequently with the sick and the sorrowful.

If there be one habit likely to be injuriously acquired in the sick chamber, it is that of praying in too low a tone of voice. A little common sense will, however, remedy this; and the benevolent prudence which enjoins a low tone in prayer with the sick, (unless they be deaf,) will also suggest the propriety of praying in a larger company so as to be heard by all.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. Prov. xi. 25.

It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting. Eccl. vii. 2.

I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Matt. xxv. 36.

Pure religion .... is to visit the fatherless, and the widows in their affliction. James, i. 27.

XXVI.—PRAYER IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

I wish that every Christian pilgrim in the way of grace, as he walks through the Lord's pastures, would try to lead at least one little child by the hand; and perhaps, while he is endeavouring to guide and preserve his young and feeble companion, the Lord will recompense him double for all his cares.

REV. LEGH RICHMOND.

It has pleased God to bless the benevolent efforts of his people, so as to render them subservient to many important purposes—besides

the fulfilment of their first and kind intentions. This truth, which might be illustrated by reference to the indirect effects of many other charities, has been singularly evinced in the personal and unanticipated benefits which Sunday-school teachers have derived from their endeavours to instruct the rising race. Perhaps more young Christians have, in the nineteenth century, obtained the power of free prayer, through the instrumentality of the duties, the circumstances, and the associations of the Sunday-school, than in any other way. They only meant to teach poor children, but they have insensibly been taught themselves.

A Sabbath-school teacher has a motive to endeavour to pray well, by which every Christian cannot be inspired. The first lispings of some of the children, in prayer to God, may be directed by the example which he is enabled to present.

The act of praying with children—if there be any becoming sense of the manner in which the service should be conducted—is likely to occasion a simple and unaffected habit in the expression of devotional ideas. The Christian who prays most like "a little child" will pray best; and the act of praying with little children is a natural method of acquiring this holy art.

Sunday-school prayers are always expected to

be short prayers; the person who conducts them has, therefore, the two-fold advantage of not being *required* to pray long, and of acquiring a habit of brevity and sententiousness which may be advantageous in future life.

"Ambrose was made Bishop of Milan in his youth, and therefore taught and learned at the same time;" a good example for Sunday-school teachers, as well as for ministers. Teaching is one way to learn; and learning is the way to teach.

If we would obtain other gifts, we must use those we have, for the glory of God, and the good of our fellow-creatures. The servant who employed his talents is represented as receiving more; and it is promised, that "he that watereth shall be watered also himself." It is not surprising that so much personal advantage has been derived from Sabbath-school teaching.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Moses took Jethro's sheep to fresh pasture, and received refreshments himself. See Ex. iii.

Rahab received the spies in peace, and saved her life by the service which she rendered them. See Josh. vi. 20; Heb. xi. 31.

Mordecai took the orphan Hadassah under his protection, as his own child; she afterwards saved his life and that of his people. See Esther, ii.—viii.

Paul was the spiritual father of Titus; and God, that

comforteth those that are cast down, comforted him by the coming of his own child. 2 Cor. vii. 6.

For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. See Matt. xxv. 14—29.

A doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed, (*Marg.* doing.) James, i. 25.

XXVII.—ON LONG PRAYERS AND REPETITIONS.

While there may be a sinful brevity, there may also be a sinful and injurious tediousness. Some are so short that there is scarcely time for the warmth of devotion to be felt; others are so lengthened that the flame of devotion is ready to die. How often is this remark illustrated—"When weariness begins, devotion ends."—REV. ALEX. FLETCHER.

THE chief fault of some good prayers is (says JOHN NEWTON) that they are too long.

"Long prayers* for a pretence" and "vain repetitions"† were each censured by our Lord. The former was the sin of the Pharisees, the latter the folly of the heathen; and it is the wisdom of the Christian to avoid the parade of

* Those who professed to be very religious among the Pharisees are said to have prayed nine hours a day.

† "Talk not idly,—*me battologesete*,—use not vain repetitions. This interpretation is rather too confined. Vain repetitions are doubtless included in the prohibition; but they are not all that is here prohibited. Everything in words that may be justly called *vain*, *idle*, or *foolish*, may be considered as comprehended under the term *battologein*."—DR. CAMPBELL.

the one, and the dulness of the other; but as our Lord's censure of the one does not condemn *all* long prayers, so the condemnation of the other was not intended to forbid *all* repetition.

In some of the Psalms, in the prayer of Solomon, and in the nightly engagements of Christ and his apostles, there are examples of lengthened entreaty; and the Psalms afford some interesting proofs that every reiteration of the same sentiment is not a vain repetition.

The house of God is called in Scripture "the house of *prayer*," (as some one has said,) "rather than the house of *preaching*;" yet this is no reason why, when several persons might pray, that the first should occupy the greatest portion of the time allotted for the service. The church should be edified by the varied gifts of its members; and it is only a decent courtesy to our fellow-Christians to suppose that all the gifts of the church are not concentrated in ourselves.

Although it might be admitted that some persons may object to long prayers, because they are personally destitute of the spirit of prayer, and because their unrenewed hearts can only tolerate a prayer-meeting when it is naturally enlivened by frequent singing, change of posture, and variety in the persons who engage; yet even wise and good men commonly prefer a

number of short prayers to one of extreme length. LEIGHTON remarks, "when we pray in company, because men cannot know the state of other men's hearts, usually a convenient midst, betwixt extremes, viz. briefness and length, seems most desirable;" and WHITFIELD is reported to have once said, "you prayed me into a good frame, and you prayed so long that you prayed me out of it."

Fifteen minutes would suffice for the solemn repetition of the longest prayer in Scripture.

A person, who, after publicly praying for some minutes, feels that he is not sufficiently at liberty to ensure a proper performance of the duty, seldom improves the matter by employing a very long period. Indeed though it may sometimes occur that unusual heaviness may precede unusual liberty, the length of a prayer will be most commonly complained of when it has been obvious that true devotion was least enjoyed in the exercise. "This, then, briefly, is the fault here, when the long continuance, and much repetition in prayer is affected, as a thing of itself available, when heaping on words, and often beating over the same words, though the heart bear them not company, is judged to be prayer; and generally, whensoever the tongue outruns the affections, then is prayer turned into babblings."*

* Leighton.

"If we would derive from prayer meetings all the advantages they are capable of affording, we must conduct them upon a wise and prudent plan. The beauty, the spirit, and the edification, of these exercises are lost when those who engage in prayer are long, and use tautology; then they are tedious and irksome, and we depart with minds fatigued and depressed, instead of being refreshed and strengthened."*

A Christian may have gifts which qualify him to take *part* in a religious service, when it may not be desirable that he should occupy the *whole of it*.

In those prayers which precede other specific duties, it is proper to remember that religion does not *wholly* consist in prayer. The soldier must not spend his entire time in direct intercourse with his sovereign, any more than he must pretend to fight his battles in his own name. In the Sunday-school, in the family, sometimes in the sick chamber, and in some other circumstances, it is important to remember this. David praised God seven times a-day, (Ps. cxix. 164,) but he left time to transact the affairs of state, and to fulfil the ordinary duties of life. We must not be satisfied with the performance of *one* duty—however greatly we like it—where God has enjoined *many*.

* Rev. J. Townsend.

On the other hand, very short prayers in public are attended with the disadvantage of disturbing the mind in the midst of its most intense engagements; and while it is important to watch against occasioning a "weariness of the flesh," it is at least as important "not" to "quench the Spirit."

NOTE.—As many persons would receive personal "hints" on the subject of *long* prayers, if their friends were not kindly afraid of paining their minds, attention to *this* subject is very important.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

They think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Matt. vi. 7.

For long prayers, see Psalms xviii. xxxvii. lxviii. lxxviii. lxxxix. civ. cv. cvi. cvii. and cxix. The latter is however divided into octonaries, or divisions containing eight verses each, the several series commencing, in the Hebrew language, with the letter under which the prayer is arranged —a proof that all *alliteration* is not trifling.

See also Solomon's prayer. 1 Kings, viii. 12—53.

For repetitions which are not vain repetitions see Psalms lxxii. cxiv. 1, 2, cxxx. 6, cxxxvi., and several others.

Ye may all prophesy one by one. 1 Cor. xiv. 31.

Honour all men. 1 Peter, ii. 17.

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 1 Cor. xii. 4.

That the church may receive edifying. 1 Cor. xiv. 5.

We do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying. 2 Cor. xii. 19.

From whom (Christ) the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted, by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. Eph. iv. 6.

Let us therefore follow after things wherewith one may edify another. Rom. xiv. 19.

Let every one of us please his neighbour, for his good, to edification. Rom. xv. 2.

Be courteous. 1 Pet. v. 8.

Honour to whom honour. Rom. xiii. 7.

In honour, preferring one another. Rom. xii. 10.

XXVIII.—VARIETY IN PRAYER.

As religion entertains our speculations with great objects, so it entertains them with new.—SOUTH.

To honour the boundless wisdom, power, and goodness of God,—to sustain the interest of our own minds in prayer,—to meet the circumstances of our fellow-worshippers,—and to promote the general edification of the church,—variety in prayer is of much importance.

Proper variety in prayer will naturally follow an observance of the changes in our own wants and feelings, and in those of the persons with whom we are associated. It will also be promoted by enlargement on that particular part of devotion which the circumstances of the prayer may render most important.

Some persons have profitably varied their prayers by endeavouring to make a devotional

use of the parts of Scripture they had lately been reading; and some have made a similar use of the last sermons they have heard, or the last book they have perused.

We should lament if the Lord would only allow us to offer one prayer; and we do not prove our gratitude for the privilege of offering more, unless we avail ourselves of it. "To enjoy is to obey."

He can have thought but little of God, or of his soul, who can express all he has to say, in prayer, in the compass of *one* short address to the Most High.

Every part of the worship of God admits of lawful variety, in idea as much as in terms. *Few of the prayers in Scripture entirely resemble each other.*

INVOCATION will admit variety, for God is called by different names in the written word.*

ADORATION will allow of variety, for Jehovah is adored on various accounts in the Bible.

CONFESSION, alas! includes variety, if it be but conscientious and comprehensive.

PETITION is necessary on infinitely varied accounts, which alter with the year, the month, the day, the hour, or the minute, and with every other change in this changing world.

* See the close of this volume.

SELF-DEDICATION, in the words of Scripture, is variously expressed, and extending to the affections, passions, talents, influence; and the ever-growing qualities and capabilities of a man will be ever directing to renewed subjects of devotional expression before God.

THANKSGIVING is not only becoming for the mercies which do not vary in their character, but for blessings which are "new every morning."

BLESSING will profitably vary in the manner of its expression, in the topics on account of which it is uttered, and in the feelings with which men join in the exercise.

The AMEN, alone, like HIM to whom the expression has been appropriated as a name, changes not.

Prayer-leaders are not always, themselves, aware of their frequent use of the same phrases, and, if these do not refer to some very important subject, a hint from a friend may not be thrown away. Their critics should, however, be attentive enough to observe whether it be only the recurrence of a single expression or two, or an entire want of variety, before they indulge in that captious censure in which some are said to have allowed themselves.

Variety in prayer is not commanded in Scrip-

ture, but there are many examples to encourage it.

After all, there is no particular merit in making an entirely new prayer, without regarding our prominent wants at the period of supplication. To ask only once for some blessings would prove that they were not, even then, very earnestly solicited. A petitioner who should repeatedly approach his friend, and always with new requests, would be little benefited by the boast that there was "no sameness in his prayers"—if he obtained the fulfilment of none of his petitions, and failed for this very reason, that his want of perseverance proved his want of sincere anxiety on the subjects of his solicitation. A flippant love of variety, which asks for many blessings and cares for none, is not the disposition with which a sinner should approach his God.

NOTE.—At MISSIONARY prayer meetings, variety would be often profitably attained by a becoming attention to the "Reports" and "Chronicles" of their proceedings. Apart, indeed, from their influence in promoting a profitable variety, common Christian principle should suggest this habit. At the present time, for instance, no one could appropriately pray for the Christian brethren in China, in Madagascar, in the South Seas, in the West Indies, or in Africa, without some knowledge of their recent circumstances. The embarkation, the peculiar trials, and occasionally the decease of Christian missionaries, would also not only supply interesting subjects of prayer, but it is our positive duty thus to bear the circumstances of our brethren before the Lord.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in due season: his leaf also shall not wither. Ps. i. 3.

I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. Ps. lii. 8.

I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. Gen. xxxii. 26.

There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterwards he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? Luke, xviii. 1—8.

Jesus went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Matt. xxvi. 46.

Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body. Heb. xiii. 3.

So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him. Esther, iv. 17. (*But see context.*)

XXIX. — ON REALIZING THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN PRAYER.

Let communion with God be your drift, and the very life, and soul, and sweetness of every ordinance. You never read of a soul more thirsty after ordinances than David, yet if you look well into the expressions, you will find, that it was not so much after them, as after God in them; not after the dead letter, but after the living God.—SHAW.

HE who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," said, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;" and it is not less true of the Christian church than of the temple of Solomon, that "His eyes and his heart shall be there perpetually." When Judas said unto him, (not Iscariot,) "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

The greatest honour God bestows on man is the manifestation of Himself to the soul; the most striking mark of human degradation is the apathy which some men can evince in relation to the enjoyment of His presence.

No other qualification will constitute a man a good prayer-leader, if he be indifferent to the enjoyment of the presence of God in worship.

"The Lord God is a sun;"—his presence must therefore give light, and his absence leave the mind in darkness. "The Lord God is a shield;"—if, therefore, in the act of prayer, there be any danger from the darts of the adversary, to realize the Divine presence is to enjoy the truest ground of security.

In the presence of God is "fulness of joy;"—if delight can inspire the mind and cause the lips to speak, the presence of God will greatly assist the believer's prayer. "There is so much correspondence between the heart and the tongue that they will both speak at once."*

"Though a gracious soul may not always enjoy sensible communion with God in the ordinances; yet it has always this good sign, that it cannot be easy and satisfied without it."†

The Psalmist urges *The presence of God in Zion* as a plea for the success of prayer. See Ps. lxxiv. 2.

AUSTIN inquired, "Where can I be ill with God? where can I be well without him?" The humblest Christian might have answered—"Not at the footstool."

* Bp. Hall. † Dr. Gifford.

Even poor HAGAR knew how to pray, when she could say, "Thou God seest me."

Half the fears and anxieties which unfit some persons for public prayer arise from their not sufficiently realizing the presence of God.

One reason why they worship better in heaven than we do on the earth is, that in heaven they always *see* God.

To solicit the presence of God is to ask an undeserved and a most distinguished favour; but, it is only to ask that the intention of Christ's ascension may be fulfilled in the experience of the worshippers. Jesus "gave gifts to men—that the Lord God might dwell among them."

The reason which our Lord assigns as certainly proving that prayer will be answered is, the certainty of his own presence "where two or three are gathered together in HIS name."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly. Ps. cxxxviii. 6.

The fool hath said in his heart, no God. Ps. xiv. 1.

Without me ye can do nothing. John, xv. 5.

The joy of the Lord is your strength. Neh. viii. 10.

To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. Ps. lxv. 2.

Fear thou not; for I am with thee. Is. xli. 10.

Thou hast ascended on high . . . . thou hast received gifts for men, that the Lord God might dwell among them. Ps. lxviii. 18.

If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

XXX.—ON WANDERING THOUGHTS IN PRAYER.

Sin within always works, and labours to bring forth the deeds of the flesh. It is always either inclining to evil, or hindering from good, or disframing the soul, and making it less meet for converse with God. It deceives, seduces, and tempts; and in some measure corrupts all that we perform to God, or do for him.—LADY ELIZ. BROOKE.

THE undivided attention of the mind is almost as necessary to the gift as to the spirit of prayer.

Self-government is the most important of all kinds of government, and the government of the thoughts the most important part of self-government; but the difficulty of governing the thoughts is nearly equal to its importance.

The righteous "hate vain thoughts,"—the wicked "walk after their own thoughts in a way that is not good."

A man may hate the thief in his habitation, and yet find it difficult to dislodge him; but if he love him, he will not even try to expel him.

unless he do it to save his credit in some other respects.

Evil thoughts "proceed from the heart," and it is not easy for a man to run from his own heart; but regeneration may be expected to produce its effects even here. Changed men have, however, reason to be watchful; for the principal seat of a disease is not unlikely to be the last from which it will be driven. "He that would walk upright must have one eye upward to Jesus Christ, and another inward to the corruption of human nature."*

There is the greater need of watchfulness against wandering thoughts in prayer, because what is innocent at another time may be sufficiently inappropriate to desecrate an act of worship.

Though evil thoughts "proceed" from the heart, yet the heart may be prompted by external objects. The eye has so often offended in this matter that many pious persons are accustomed to pray with the eye-lids closed. The genius of Christianity may justify this temporary "putting out a right eye," lest it "offend" the holy purposes of the soul, but the examples of Scripture favour the practice of "lifting up the eyes to heaven." The use of abstractedness

* Boston.

may, in general, be as well served by the latter custom as by the former; but some method of watchfulness over the eye is extremely important.

It is of consequence to watch against the first temptations to wandering thoughts.*

The power to govern the thoughts in prayer will much depend on their subjection under other circumstances; just as those children are most easily managed at church who are not allowed unlawful licence at home.

A man may not always immediately and di-

* The importance of this remark will be admitted by most persons who are accustomed to observe the workings of their own minds. It is affectingly illustrated in the following extract:—"I have had some serious conversation with my father; and one evening he concluded by recommending me to address Heaven to have mercy upon me, and to join my own prayers to his constant and paternal ones for my reformation. These expressions, with his preceding counsels, and his affecting delivery of them, had such an effect upon me, that I had bent the stubborn sinews of my knees, when it occurred to me, that my devotions might be *seen* through the key-hole. This drew me from my pious attitude, and having secured the aperture, I thought it would not be a useless precaution to let down the window curtains also; and, during the performance of that ceremony, some lively music which sprung up in the street caught my attention, and gave a sudden flirt to all my devout ideas; so I girded on my sword, and went to the theatre, where the entertainments soon put me out of humour with praying, and into humour with myself."—Thomas Lord Lyttleton.

rectly be able to control his thoughts; yet, as previous circumstances and engagements will have a material influence on their character, it is important to avoid those prior engagements which are known to give an unhappy direction to the faculties of the mind. It is idle to say, "Thoughts are not under my control," when they are the direct results of previous habits, associations, or neglects.

"And this is one great cause of our wanderings, that we do not at our entrance to prayer compose ourselves to due thoughts of God, and to set ourselves in his presence; this would do much to save us, and ballast our minds, that they tumble not to and fro, as is their custom."*

A deceased country minister, who sometimes saw his people much perplexed in their endeavours to prevent their dogs from entering the place of worship, and who naturally concluded that the animals should have been driven back *before* they had reached the entrance of the house of God, once drew a comparison between these intruders and "wandering thoughts," which, however plain, may not be useless. It is wise, when it is possible, to prevent bad thoughts from accompanying us to the very door of the sanctuary.

* Leighton.

"One proposes to fill a measure with *tares*; now, if I can fill it first with *wheat*, I defy his attempts."*

GOUGE recommends praying *aloud*, as one remedy against wandering thoughts in *private* prayer; and also hints that, if this fail, it may be well to REPEAT those sentences with which the heart has not gone in their first utterance.

"We must draw off, from prayer, from resting in it, or trusting upon it; a man may pray much, and instead of drawing nigh to God, or enjoying sweet communion with Christ, he may draw nigh to prayer, his thoughts may be more upon prayers than upon God to whom he prays; and he may live more upon his cushion than upon Christ; but when a man indeed draws nigh to God in prayer, he forgets prayer, and remembers God, and prayer goes for nothing, but Christ is all."†

Satan is never more bitterly disposed towards the "sons of God" than when he "comes with them" to "appear before God." It may be a part of HIS business to delude the believer with wandering thoughts, and CHRISTIAN may not always "know his own voice." The conflict, in this case, may be arduous, but the greater the difficulty, the more glorious the conquest; and it

* Newton. † Ambrose.

is a true comfort that a Christian may pray for the help of the Holy Spirit against wandering thoughts in prayer.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Let the unrighteous man forsake his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, &c. Isaiah, lv. 17.

I muse on the work of thy hands. I stretch forth my hands unto thee. Psalm cxlv. 5, 6.

While I was musing the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue. Psalm xxxix. 3.

Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. 2 Cor. x. 5.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. Psalm cxix. 37.

The thoughts of the righteous are right. Prov. xii. 1.

Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart. Jer. iv. 18.

When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. Isaiah, lix. 19.

XXXI.—UNCANDID CRITICISM.

The wicked dwell more on the faults of God's children, than on their graces; as the flies settle on a sore place; and as vultures fly over the garden of delight, to pitch on carrion.—DR. MANTON.

CRITICISMS on prayer, purposely indulged during the time of devotion, must be made under very

peculiar circumstances, to be innocent in their own character; yet it is wiser to endeavour to improve, even by these, than to cherish a revengeful spirit towards those who have made them. "If a dog bark at a sheep, the sheep will not bark again at a dog."*

If "envy, malice, hatred, or uncharitableness," have provoked an *enemy* to make unpleasant observations, it will be turning his unkindness to an excellent account if it be possible to become the wiser for it; and if love have made a *friend* anxious that we should excel in every thing we do, it is not worth while to be angry on that account. Young Christians have indeed derived great benefit from the occasional remarks of friends upon their prayers, and older ones might, perhaps, occasionally receive a similar benefit.

Uncandid criticisms often do more real injury to the person who makes them than to him on whom they are made. If the critic be a leader of prayer himself, he is not unlikely, when it is his turn to engage, to be embarrassed by the remembrance of his own conduct;—that is, if he have a conscience that is not past feeling; and if his conscience be seared, he had better pray in private for himself, than in public for others.

* Mr. Dodd.

It may be of consequence to remember that a criticism is not necessarily an uncandid one, because it happens to be made on ourselves; and that a person does not prove himself our enemy by telling us the truth, or even by mentioning what he erroneously thinks to be truth.

There is often this one comfort under the reproofs of a friend—the persons who remind us of our failings are not generally those who most enlarge on them in our absence. Uncandid critics generally seek other auditors, and avoid those direct communications which are made by real friends.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day. 2 Sam. xvi. 12.

Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee. Prov. xx. 22.

He that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished. Prov. xvii. 5.

It is better to bear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. Eccl. vii. 5.

Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head. Psalm cxli. 5.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit. 1 Cor. xii. 4.

And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. 1 Cor. xii. 21, 22.

That make a man an offender for a word, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought. Isaiah, xxix. 21.

Be sure your sin will find you out. Num. xxxii. 20.

With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you. Mark, iv. 24.

Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves. 1 Peter, iv. 8.

Charity doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil. 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend. Prov. xxvii. 6.

XXXII.—THE PATH OF DUTY.

When our call is clear, the way is safe.
LADY ELIZ. BROOKE.

It is of consequence, in order to a becoming self-possession, in any public engagement of a religious character, to have fairly followed the leadings of Providence, and the requirements of duty, with regard to that particular exercise.

It is a bad sign if a prayer-leader never enjoys a prayer-meeting, but when he has been called upon to lead the devotion.

If it be known that a man has not obtruded himself into a prominent situation, those whose opinions are of most consequence will always make a large allowance in his favour; and when it is *not* known, it is a great comfort to a good

man's own mind, if he have honestly followed his convictions of duty. To GOD all our thoughts and ways are ever known.

"Uppermost seats in the synagogue" are, to a renewed mind, only comfortable seats when they are fairly reached. An unrenewed mind has no right to occupy them in any case.

When a Christian has gotten fairly into what he regards as a difficulty, he is in the way to get fairly out of it.

A man is under temptation when he is led to expect that help in an exercise to which he is not lawfully directed, which is only promised to him in his proper duty.

"A cripple in the right way, may beat a racer in the wrong one."*

ILLUSTRATIONS.

He knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. Job, xxiii. 10.

As thy days, so shall thy strength be. Deut. xxxiii. 25.

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. Psalm xci. 11. When Satan quoted this passage in the temptation of Christ, he omitted "all thy ways." See Matt. iv. 6.

So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God. Gen. xlv. 8.

If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. Exodus, xxxiii. 15.

Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing,

* Lord Bacon.

and love salutations in the market-places, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms in feasts. Mark, xii. 38, 39.

But, when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher. Luke, xiv. 10.

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 1 Tim. iii. 6.

XXXIII.—GESTURE, TONES, AND ENUNCIATION.

These external things are neither parts of our devotion, nor by any strength in themselves direct causes of it; but the grace of God is pleased to move us by ways suitable to our nature, and to sanctify these sensible helps to higher purposes.—SOUTH.

PROPER gestures, tones, and enunciation, although of much less consequence than the spirit of prayer, are yet of importance to "the edifying of the church," and to the prevention of scandal from without.

If it do not even produce injurious effects on the mind of the prayer-leader himself, an unnatural mode of expression is likely to disturb the devotions of others.

It ill becomes a suppliant before the Most High God to employ his attention with the vagaries of a posture-master; but if the heart be duly impressed with the spirit of prayer, it is to be expected that a decent and devout demeanour will naturally follow.

It is no trifling offence for a Christian to approach the throne of God with less solemnity than an untutored savage advances to his idol. Christians may come with "boldness" to the mercy-seat, but it is expected to be an "humble boldness." Impudence is not a preparative for prayer, any more than affected humility.

Distinct and audible tones are essential to the interest and profit of the silent part of a worshipping assembly; but a turbulent or ostentatious method of expression tends rather to destroy than to assist the devout feelings of the heart.

"Very loud speaking is a fault, when the size of the place and the number of hearers do not render it necessary .... There may be very little of the power of the Spirit, though the voice should be heard in the street, or the neighbourhood .... The other extreme of speaking too low is not so frequent; but if we are not heard, we might as well altogether hold our peace. It exhausts the spirits, and wearies the attention, to be listening for a length of time to a low voice."*

"Every man's voice has naturally a certain compass, above which it cannot rise, and below which it cannot sink. The ordinary tone in

* Newton.

which we converse is nearly about the middle of that compass. When we make that, therefore, as it were, the key-note of our discourse, we have the power with ease of both elevating and depressing the voice, in uttering particular words, just as the sense requires, that they may be uttered emphatically, or otherwise .... Everybody must be sensible that when the voice is at unnatural stretch, it can give no emphasis to any word whatever without squeaking; so that the speaker, for the ease of his own lungs, is forced to take refuge either in a tiresome monotony or a drowsy cant. Besides, it deserves to be remarked, that most men, when earnest in conversation on any subject, naturally, without any study, give their voice the proper inflections which the import of what is said requires. When, therefore, we speak in public, if we ourselves enter seriously into the subject, and are, as it were, interested in it, we shall, without any effort, being taught by nature and assisted by habit, give such an emphasis to the words which require it, and such cadence to the sentences as in conversing on serious and moving subjects we never fail to employ; whereas, if we speak on a forced key, we cannot have the same assistance either from nature or habit."*

* Dr. Campbell.

The opposite extremes of rapid utterance and a dull slowness have been observed to prevail in different circles, perhaps from the insensible influence of example in respected persons belonging to such societies; but it would be well if the several parties could correct each other. In general, however, there is much appropriateness in the well-known lines—

> "Learn to speak slow—all other graces
> Will follow in their proper places."

It is as reasonable to expect that piety should have its own tones and methods of expression, as that any other emotion of the mind should be evinced in the gestures and articulation of the man; but affectation, at all times unpleasing, is never so unlovely as when it presumes to approach the footstool of the Almighty. On the other hand, carelessness and unholy familiarity with "the Judge of all the earth" is indeed an awful crime.

The longer a bad habit has continued, the more difficult, in general, is its cure: it is therefore a privilege to have a friend who is able to discern, and willing, in a proper spirit, to mention, any prominent defect in the tone, the manner, or the topics of prayer. We can see others more perfectly, and hear others more impartially, than we can, commonly, see and hear ourselves, and an occasional interchange of friendly remark may render mutual service.

"A Christian should never plead spirituality for being a sloven; if he be but a shoe-cleaner, he should be the best in the parish."*

The gestures of the body in prayer are variously represented in Scripture. Phinehas, Solomon, Nehemiah, with the Levites and the people, the publican, and the "great multitude before the throne," worshipped *standing*. See Judg. xx. 28. 1 Kings, viii. 22. Neh. ix. 9. 1 Chron. xxiii. 30. Luke, xviii. 13. Rev. vii. 9.

Solomon, Daniel, Paul, Stephen, Peter, and Jesus Christ, *kneeled* in prayer. See 2 Chron. vi. 13. Dan. vi. 10. Acts, xx. 36. Acts, vii. 60. Acts, ix. 40. And Luke, xxii. 41.

Moses, David, the Elders of Israel, Job, Ezekiel, and Jesus Christ, sometimes *fell on the face* and prayed. See Deut. ix. 18, 25. 1 Chron. xxi. 16. Job, i. 20. Ezek. ix. 8. And Matt. xxvi. 39.

"Jehoshaphat and all Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, fell before the Lord, worshipping the Lord;" while the Levites "stood

* Newton.

up to praise the Lord God of Israel." 2 Chron. xx. 18, 19.

David, once, "went in and *sat* before the Lord," and prayed; and Nehemiah "*sat down* and wept and mourned days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven." See 2 Sam. vii. 18, and Neh. i. 4.

CHRIST commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. See Matt. xiv. 19.

Men are bidden to pray with *the head uncovered;* women with *the head covered.** See 1 Cor. xi. 4, 5.

"Women with the head covered." Then females were to pray! But where?—and how?

It does not follow, from the interdiction of the speaking of females "in the church," that women had no right to speak elsewhere. "Priscilla," as well as "Aquila, took Apollos, and expounded unto him the way of the Lord more perfectly;" and Paul wrote, "Help those women who laboured with me in the gospel."

That the act of prayer—original, verbal prayer—is not improper for women, is triumphantly evident from the fine song of Miriam, from the grateful thanksgiving of Hannah, and from the equally beautiful and devout prayers of Mary and Elizabeth.

The moon only shines in her orbit,—but how beautifully she shines *there!*

Providence has conferred great honour on woman in

There is frequent mention of the *lifting up of hands* in the prayers of Scripture characters. See Ex. ix. 29. Ps. lxiii. 4. 1 Kings, viii. 22. Isa. i. 15. Lam. iii. 41. And Tim. ii. 8.

Stephen prayed with a *loud voice,* in a large and tumultuous assembly; Hannah *spake in her heart, only her lips moved.* The Ninevites were to *cry mightily* unto God. See Acts, vii. 60. 1 Sam. i. 13. Jonah, iii. 8.

entrusting to her care the first and—so far as their influence in the formation of character is concerned—the most important years of the life of man. Surely it was not intended that a mother should be ordained to be incapable of praying with her own child! He is an unhappy man whose wife cannot even pray with his children—whether he knows his unhappiness or not.

In a world where religion is too often neglected till the last hour, it frequently occurs that in the time of extreme affliction, woman only is admitted to the chamber of the dying sufferer, and woman only could afford assistance then. How important that she should be able to pray!

There are circles into which it is not even desirable that any but females should have access; yet praying Christians are wanted there.

Unmingled good has often resulted from the meetings of Christian women for prayer with each other. The most fastidious mind could hardly suggest an objection to associations of this character.

Seven out of the nine arguments for extemporary prayer (mentioned in Section II. *supra*) apply to woman as well as to man.

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast."

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Let all things be done decently. 1 Cor. iv. 20.

Let every one please his neighbour, for his good, to edification. Rom. xv. 2.

Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. 1 Cor. x. 33.

Charity doth not behave itself unseemly. 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God. 1 Tim. iii. 5.

Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. 1 Cor. xiv. 16, 17.

XXXIV.—DICTION, STYLE, OR EXPRESSION IN PRAYER.

It were to be wished that the advocates for the best of causes would, with Solomon, seek out acceptable words.—TOPLADY.

GOD can understand the desires and petitions of the heart, when *no* words are uttered; but the edification of others, and even our own profit, may be greatly advanced by the employment of proper expressions in prayer.

"Sound speech, which cannot be condemned," is at least as important in the service of God as in any other engagement; but an affectation of fine words or phrases is always unseemly in a suppliant.

Every thought which assists the mind to realize the intention of prayer must in some degree be suitable to the exercise; but it is important that even proper thoughts should be so expressed and uttered that they may lead the mind to God, rather than attract attention by their own peculiarity.

"Flowers of rhetoric, in serious discourses, are like the blue and red flowers in corn, pleasing to those who come only for amusement, but prejudicial to him who would reap the profit."*

The best expressions in prayer are such as are natural, easy, and unaffected. If *art* be at all lawful in worship, its concealment is unquestionably its perfection. Antiquated sentences, hard words, new terms, vulgar sayings, obscure or light and airy phrases, in worship, are all bad.

There are different opinions on *quotations* in prayer, and perhaps all must depend on the motives for, and the manner of, their introduction. Some ministers and others have found it pro-

* Anon.

fitable to act on the following principle:—Endeavour to express your prayers and praises as naturally as you can; do not *try* to quote uninspired authority; but do not hesitate to use the words of other men in prayer, if they readily occur to your mind, and express your ideas with more propriety than any you can frame yourself.

Part of the prayer of Jehoshaphat, though composed in an hour when he could not have indulged in affected imitation, consisted of an extract from the prayer of Solomon.*

God will not be angry with his people for using lawful helps to worship Him with the best.

"Avoid all foreign and uncommon words which are borrowed from other languages, and not sufficiently naturalized, or which are old and worn out of use. Avoid those expressions which are too philosophical, and those which savour too much of mystical divinity. Avoid a long train of dark metaphors, or of expressions that are used only by some particular violent party men. Avoid length and obscurity in your sentences, and in the placing of your words; and do not interline your expression with too

* See and compare 1 Kings, viii. 33, 37, with 2 Chron. xx. 9.

many *parentheses*, which cloud and entangle the sense."*

"As in all our conversations, and conferences, and discourses, we should labour to make every thing we say to be understood immediately; so especially in prayer, where the affections should be moved, which cannot well be done if the judgment must take much pains to understand what is said."*

And as it is good to be methodical in prayer, so it is to be sententious: the Lord's Prayer is remarkably so; and David's Psalms, and many of St. Paul's prayers, which we have in his epistles: we must consider that the greater part of those that join with us in prayer will be in danger of losing or mistaking the sense if the periods be long, and the parentheses many; and in this, as in other things, they who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. Jacob must lead as the children and flocks can follow."†

"When you address God in worship, 'tis a fault to be ever borrowing phrases from the theatre, and from profane poets. This does not seem to be the language of Canaan. Many of their expressions are too light, and wild, and airy for so awful a duty. An excessive fondness

* Watts. † Henry.

of elegance and finery of style in prayer discovers the same pride and vanity of mind as an affectation of many jewels and fine apparel in the house of God: it betrays us into a neglect of our hearts, and of experimental religion, by an affectation to make the nicest speech, and say the finest things we can, instead of sincere devotion, and praying in the spirit. Besides, if we will deal in lofty phrases, Scripture itself sufficiently abounds with them; and these are the most agreeable to God, and most affecting to his own people."*

"Incense may be presented in a cruse of the coarsest pottery, or in a classic vase of the most ornamented porcelain: it is of the same quality and value in each: the vessels, indeed, differ; yet each is but an earthen vessel; and though, in many respects, they are contrasted, both, in reality, abound in flaws, are soon defaced, and easily broken."†

"There is no necessity of being rough and slovenly, in order to be sincere."‡

"Sometimes persons have been guilty of great indecencies, and exposed religion to profane scoffs, by a too familiar mention of the name of Christ, and by irreverent freedoms when they speak to God."‡

* Watts. † Sheppard. ‡ Watts.

"Be not over fond of a nice uniformity of words, nor of perpetual diversity of expression in every prayer; it is best to keep the middle, between these two extremes."*

"True eloquence does not consist, as the rhetoricians assure us, in saying great things in a sublime style, but in a simple style; for there is, properly speaking, no such thing as a sublime style, the sublimity lies only in the things; and when they are not so, the language may be turgid, affected, metaphorical, but not affecting."†

"I know of no expedient to speak; to speak at once intelligibly, and feelingly, except to understand the language. To be convinced of the truth of the object, to be perfectly acquainted with the subject in view, to prepossess yourself with a low† opinion of your audience, and to do the rest extempore."‡

* Watts. † Goldsmith on Eloquence.

‡ I have cited this passage from Dr. Goldsmith, because I conceive that it forcibly presents the qualifications for true eloquence, and have sometimes wished that the article from which it is extracted were more commonly known; but I beg to disavow the recommendation of any other "low opinion of an audience," and especially in *sacred* engagements, than that which arises from the conviction that it is more important to please God, than to please *any* man.—Ed.

"With some, a high degree of art is employed; arrangements are carefully made beforehand, from which not the slightest deviation is allowed, and a labour is bestowed to produce *effect*, which defeats the end. The appearance of art (and it will betray itself) always disgusts. The moment a hearer perceives a *design* to move and affect him, he is on his guard. Impression then is hopeless. The admiration of the people may indeed be extorted by effort, but the feelings of the heart flow freely forth only to what is natural, unaffected, and genuine."*

"He that will seriously endeavour and accustom himself to deliver his thoughts in a proper, full, significant expression, and to be well acquainted with those many examples which the Scripture doth afford to this purpose, such a one may by practice and experience arrive to a good ability and readiness in this kind."†

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The preacher sought to find out acceptable words. Eccl. xii. 10.

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. Eccl. v. 2.

* Rev. Dr. Leifchild *on Preaching*,—but equally applicable to Prayer.

† Wilkins.

Use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do. Matt. vi. 7.

If I pray in an unknown tongue, my understanding is unfruitful. 1 Cor. xiv. 14.

In the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. 1 Cor. xiv. 19.

Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. 1 Cor. xiv. 9.

Else when thou shalt bless with the Spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

Let every one of us please his neighbour, for his good to edification. Rom. xv. 2.

Sound speech that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. Titus, ii. 8.

Let all things be done decently. 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

Whatsoever things are of good report . . . . . think on these things. Phil. iv. 5.

How forcible are right words. Job, vi. 25.

XXXV.—ON THE VALUE WHICH IT IS PROPER TO ATTACH TO THE OPINION OF OTHERS CONCERNING OUR PRAYERS.

The crime of the Jewish rulers was not that they loved the praise of men, but that they loved it *more than the praise of God*.
Dr. Blair.

To be entirely indifferent to the opinions of the wise and the good is not a proof of true wisdom. The apostle who "of men sought

not glory" still endeavoured to "commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God;" and to "please all men in all things, not seeking his own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved."

Wisdom is less self-confident than folly, and he is not the most discerning person who is "wiser in his own conceit than seven men which can render a reason."

Wise men are, however, generally most pleased with those prayers in which the attempt to please them is very far less manifest than the attempt to please GOD. An unassuming deportment will always produce its effect on those whose approbation is of most value; but it is an awful compliment to any fellow-creature to seem to think of him more than of the great and glorious God. The best remedy against "the fear of man which bringeth a snare" is "the fear of the Lord, in which is strong confidence."

Undue anxiety to please men will often occasion the very consequences which are dreaded; but hope in God will give strength to the powers of the mind in which it is indulged.

There is *one* respect in which a holy man may endeavour to gratify his fellow-creatures. It is entirely right to "please every man FOR HIS GOOD unto edification."

It may appear to be a much greater trial to pray before some men than before others; but the Christian always prays before the GOD with whom it is as difficult to compare the wisest man as his meanest companion. It is as difficult to compare the largest conceivable space with INFINITY, as to compare the smallest conceivable space with that infinity.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him. Prov. xxvi. 12.

Let nothing be done through vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves Phil. ii. 3.

Be not afraid of their faces, lest I confound thee before them. Jer. i. 17.

And worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. Rom. i. 25.

The gestures of Hannah at first excited the indignation of Eli, but when he learned that she had poured out her soul before the Lord, then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. 1 Sam. i. 17.

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? 1 Pet. iii. 17.

Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Matt. xviii. 20.

Thou God seest me. Gen. xvi. 13.

XXXVI.—ON PERSONALITIES IN PRAYER.

Averse alike to flatter or offend.—POPE.

THE indulgence of unhallowed tempers, though always unlovely, is never so entirely awful as when it occurs immediately before the throne of God; a man has no occasion to approach the mercy-seat, or to fall upon his knees, to scold a fellow-creature. They who must scold had better do so in any other posture, and under any other pretence, than that of prayer to the Most High.

It is not only an act of cowardice to accuse men in a method which admits of no defence, and unkind to risk the excitement of disgust towards the services in which we are permitted to engage; but it is a high offence against the LORD to employ prayer for any meaner purpose than the promotion of His glory.

Compliments which may be tolerable elsewhere are not becoming in the act of worship; but sincere thanksgiving for what divine grace has done in any heart, or by any agency, is warranted by the example of Scripture; so also is prayer on behalf of our friends or others. God, who enjoins courteousness, will not be angry be-

cause his people evince it in their prayers: but then it must be Christian courtesy.

If we sinfully forget to pray for our friends when they are absent, we should regard it as a privilege to be reminded of our duty by their presence. Still, we should "go and sin no more."

The act of praying for a friend is likely to render the soul more anxious to perform its other duties towards him. It is so great a mercy *to have* a friend, that we should not feel it a toil to ask a blessing on him.

We are bidden to pray *for* our enemies, but not to pray *at* them. "Nothing but benevolence should appear in our prayers for others; the prayer of Moses for the tribes contains nothing but blessings."*

It is possible to ask a blessing on a friend without publishing his peculiar circumstances to all who are present.

"One would wish that, with the exception of very peculiar cases, *personalities*, when they must be introduced, should be as brief as possible in public prayer, especially such as point to individuals who are present, and whose feelings, one should think, would earnestly deprecate the being

* The Rev. R. Adams.

made conspicuous objects of the prolonged attention of the congregation."*

"There is some hazard of our being too much influenced by personal feelings with regard to our fellow-creatures, or by prejudices of party, to which even good men are liable. We may be betrayed into allusions to persons and temporal affairs, which may touch some jarring strings in the sentiments and passions of different fellow-worshippers. We may be tempted to please men by too favourable descriptions or complimentary implications, or to reprove them when they have displeased us, by implications of complaint and censure."†

"It is equally wrong to make our prayers the medium of publishing our political creed. To endeavour to make God a party in those differences which subsist among good men on the subject of public measures is wrong in itself, and tends to destroy that harmony and good-will which it is one end of these prayer-meetings to promote."‡

The perception of our danger may prove the means of our preservation.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

As ye would therefore that men should do unto you, do ye also to them likewise. Luke, vi. 31.

* Foster's Character of Hall. † Dr. Smith. Rev. John Townsend.

Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way. Rom. xiv. 13.

Be not rash with thy mouth. Eccl. v. 1.

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy. Phil. i. 3, 4.

Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking flavour; so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour. Eccl. x. 1.

XXXVII.—THE INFLUENCE OF A QUARRELSOME TEMPER IN UNFITTING THE MIND FOR ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC PRAYER.

In one word, communion with God requires that we be found in all the means of grace, and in the way of universal duty; and that we shun, as we would poison or the plague, whatever tends to cast a damp upon our intercourse with the Holy Ghost, to tarnish our graces, or darken our evidences. — TOPLADY'S SERMONS.

THE tempter can hardly devise a more effective method to injure either the spirit or the expression of prayer, than the excitement of a quarrelsome temper. There is something awful in the very name of an "accuser of the brethren."

As dissension in a household is ever an obstacle to family prayer, so there is scarcely any occurrence more likely to prevent the hallowed interest of a prayer-meeting, than a quarrelsome disposition in those who attend it.

The very act of attempting to pray may be the means of bringing the prayer-leader himself to repentance; but this repentance, at a moment when he cannot apply for a reconciliation, may confuse his mind in the public service. It is, indeed, a lesser evil to be embarrassed in the expression of prayer, than to have a hardened and impenitent heart; but the occasion for this lesser evil itself had better be avoided.

If Christians are tempted to quarrel, it may be well for them to remember they have to pray together, or they must sacrifice a privilege which can never be sacrificed without loss to the soul.

> "The Spirit, like some heav'nly dove,
> Flies from the realms of noise and strife."

The subjects on which men quarrel are not, generally, so important as those on which they pray; it is preferable, in many cases, to suffer the loss of all that we think man ought to do for us, than to unfit our minds to ask the greater blessings which come from GOD.

"No man ever offended his own conscience, but first or last it was revenged upon him for it."*

"Were you to find that even the crossing of a straw was conducive to bring a cloud upon your soul, and to obstruct your fellowship with God, it would be as much your duty to abstain from

* Dr. South.

crossing that straw, as if 'Thou shalt not cross a straw' were one of the ten commandments."*

"There is this great mischief always attending disputes about religion, that while our heads are so busily employed, our hearts are in danger of losing its power and efficacy."†

"Vulgar people," says Mrs. H. More, "will be vulgar in their religion."

"To be able to bear provocation is an argument of great wisdom; and to forgive it, of a great mind."‡

"You will be little in prayer to God, I warrant you, if much in squabbling with your brethren. It is impossible to go from wrangling to prayer with a free spirit; and if you should be so bold as to knock at God's door, you are sure to have a cold welcome. Matt. v. 24."§

"God did not choose the eagle or lion for sacrifice, but the lamb and the dove."‖

"The God whom we worship is known by the title of *The God of Peace*."**

"It is a proof of the love of God that we can have no fellowship with Him in anger."††

"God will not countenance a bad spirit in his children."‡‡

* Toplady. † Dr. Trapp. ‡ Abp. Tillotson
§ Gurnall ‖ Mr. Jenkins, quoted by Toplady.
** Blair. †† Rev. R. Adams. ‡‡ Rev. R. Philip.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with. Prov. xvii. 14.

And when ye stand praying, forgive. Mark, xi. 25.

Giving honour .... as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. 1 Pet. iii. 7.

Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. 1 Peter, iii. 9.

Where envying and strife is, there is confusion. Jam. iii 6.

Be kindly affectioned one to another; serving the Lord; continuing instant in prayer. Rom. xii. 10, 11, 12.

Be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath. 1 Tim. ii. 8.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Rom. xii. 18.

XXXVIII.—THE QUESTION OF PREMEDITATED METHOD IN PRAYER.

There is, in this business of preparation, a great difference to be allowed for, in respect of persons and times.—Bishop Wilkins.

"It is requisite to the decent performance of this duty that some proper method be observed, not only that what is said be good, but that it may be said in its proper place and time; and

that we offer not anything to the glorious Majesty of heaven and earth which is confused, impertinent, and undigested. Care must be taken then more than ever that we be not rash with our mouth, nor hasty to utter anything before God; that we say not what comes uppermost, nor use such repetitions as evidence, not the fervency, but the barrenness, of our spirits; but that the matters we are dealing with God about, being of such vast importance, we observe a decorum in our words, that they be well chosen, well weighed, and well placed."*

"There are those (I doubt not) who at some times have their hearts so wonderfully elevated and enlarged in prayer, above themselves; at other times such a fixedness and fulness of thought, such a fervour of devout and pious affections, the product of which is such fluency and variety of pertinent and moving expressions, and in such a just and natural method, that then to have an eye to such a scheme as this would be in danger to cramp and straiten them. If the heart be full of its good matter, it may make the tongue as the pen of a ready writer; but this is a case that rarely happens, and ordinarily there is need of proposing to ourselves a certain method to go by in prayer, that the ser-

* Henry.

vice may be performed decently and in order, in which yet one would avoid that which looks very formal. A man may write straight without having his paper ruled."*

"Though I have here recommended a good method for prayer, and that which has been very generally approved, yet I am far from thinking we should always tie ourselves to it; that may be varied as well as the expression: thanksgiving may very aptly be put sometimes before our petitions for ourselves, as the Lord's prayer. Sometime one of these parts of prayer may be enlarged upon much more than another, or they may be decently interwoven in some other method. *Ars est celare artem.*"†

"I am persuaded that if young Christians did not give themselves up, in their first essays of prayer, to a loose and negligent habit of speaking everything that comes uppermost, but attempted to learn this holy skill by a recollection of the several parts‡ of prayer, and disposing their thoughts into this *method*, there would be greater numbers in our churches that would have arrived at a good degree of the gift of prayer, and be capable afterwards of giving a more glorious and unbounded loose to their

* Henry. † Ibid.

‡ See mnemonic lines, page 51.

souls, without breaking the rules of just and natural method; and that to the great edification of our churches, as well as of their own families."*

"After all, if some particular persons have conscientiously, and with due diligence, attempted this way, and find they always pray more usefully and more honourably, with more regularity and delight, by the mere preparation of the heart for this duty, without fixing the parts and method of the prayer in their memory beforehand, they must follow those methods of devotion themselves which they have found most effectual to attain the best ends, but not forbid the use of premeditation to others whom God hath owned and approved in that way."†

"Several books have been written to assist in the gift and exercise of prayer, as by Dr. WATTS and others, and many useful hints may be borrowed from them; but a too close attention to the method and transitions therein recommended gives an air of study and formality, and offends against that simplicity which is so essential to a good prayer, that no degree of acquired abilities can compensate for the want of it. It is possible to learn to pray mechanically, and by rule;

* Watts. † Ibid.

but it is hardly possible to do so with acceptance and benefit to others."*

"Some attention to method may be proper for the prevention of repetitions, and plain people may be a little defective in it sometimes; but this defect will not be half so tiresome and disagreeable as a studied and artificial exactness."†

"In the midland sea, galleys are found to be most useful which partly run on the legs of oars, and partly fly with the wings of sails, whereby they become serviceable both in a wind and in a calm. Such the conveniency of mixed prayer, wherein infused and acquired graces meet together."‡

"Surely premeditation of the heart (though not premeditation of every word) is required unto extemporary prayers. And grant the party praying at that very instant fore-studieth not every expression, yet surely he hath formerly laboured with his heart and tongue too, before he obtained that dexterity of utterance, properly and readily to express himself."§

"A man may conceive a prayer extempore, and yet without enthusiasm or extraordinary revelations—viz., by the help of his former studies and meditations."*

* Newton's Omicron. † Ibid.
‡ Dr. T. Fuller. § Ibid.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. 1 Thess. v. 21.

Let every man prove his own work. Gal. vi. 4.

And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them; and David put them off him. 1 Sam. xvii. 38, 39.

Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house. Prov. xxiv. 37.

Let all things be done .... in order. 1 Cor. iv. 20.

This I speak .... that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction. 1 Cor. vii. 35.

I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say. 1 Cor. x. 15.

In the multitude of counsellors there is safety. Prov. xi. 14.

XXXIX.—ON REJOICING IN THE SUCCESS OF OTHERS.

Nothing will more try a man's grace than questions of emulation.
BISHOP HALL.

To rejoice in the success of others is a part of a believer's duty; and, like every other part of that duty, it will eventually bring its own reward.

* Ambrose.

A man who is envious at the increase of his brother's gifts, will be very likely to spoil his own in the attempt at rivalry.

The soul which can rejoice in a brother's privileges becomes a partner in all his profits.

The success of an envious man is not valued by those who know his character.

"Envy is the rottenness of the bones." Prov. xiv. 20.—A man is not likely to make a good prayer-leader when the frame-work of his soul is defective.

Some things are pleasant which are not good, and some things are good which are not pleasant; but it is both good and pleasant to rejoice in the prosperity of a fellow-Christian.

"Some emulation may be good, and may be found in some good men; yet envy is wicked in itself, and only to be found in wicked minds."*

A man does not prove the greatness of his own mind by depreciating the endowments of his brethren, for "he that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour." Prov. xi. 12.

"God shewed Miriam her sin by her punishment: she went to bespatter Moses, that shone so pre-eminently with the gifts and graces of God, and God spits in her face, (Num. xii) yea, fills her all over with a noisome scab. Dost thou

* Spratt.

cordially wish well to the honour of God? Why then hangest thou thy head, and dost not rather rejoice to see him glorified by the gifts of others?"*

"And this, though little considered by the most, is one point, and not a small one, but a very profitable and comfortable article of our faith, *The Communion of Saints*, that every believer hath a share in all the prayers of all the rest; he is partner in every ship of that kind that sets to sea, and hath a portion of all their gainful voyages."†

Christians, like little children, often, insensibly and without intentional imitation, learn from each other. The improvement of those around us may therefore even be conducive to our own.

"Those who are stung with envy, especially when they allow its malignity to appear, confess a sense of their own inferiority, and in effect pay homage to that merit from which they endeavour to detract."‡

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Matthew, xix. 19.

Our beloved brother Paul, also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you. 2 Pet. iii. 15.

Honour to whom honour. Rom. xiii. 7.

* Gurnall. † Leighton. ‡ Blair.

And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. Job, xlii. 10.

Where envying and strife is, there is confusion. Jam. iii. 16.

Envy slayeth the silly one. Job, v. 2.

They that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. Job, iv. 8.

XL.—ON PRIDE AFTER PRAYER.

Pride is a vice that does not dwell exclusively in kings' houses.
REV. J. A. JAMES.

In particular, let those who enjoy the Spiritual Gifts beware of being puffed up with pride.
MACKNIGHT'S VERSION OF GAL. v. 26.

EVEN a Christian is never out of danger, except as he is preserved by the preventing grace of God.

Holy Scripture expressly commands watching *unto* prayer, and watching *in* prayer: it may be fairly inferred from many of its representations that there is also occasion to watch *after* prayer.

The deceitfulness of the human heart will sometimes render a man's blessings the occasion of his disquiet, and his strength in some points may become the occasion of eliciting his weakness in others. The man of God,* after humbling the pride of Jeroboam, became a victim to his

* 1 Kings, xiii.

own disobedience before he reached his home; and the disciples who had visited the mount of transfiguration had scarcely reached the vale before their weakness became apparent.

"When the coat of a Christian is cleanest, the devil is most desirous to roll him in the mire."*

As we are not always most profited ourselves when we are most pleased, so our fellow-creatures are not always most truly benefited by those prayers which may have occasioned them the greatest pleasure at the time when they were offered.

It is possible for a man to be mistaken when he thinks he has prayed better than his companions.

If a Christian have prayed well, it is a pity that he should spoil his prayer by being afterwards proud of it.

The wiser a man becomes, the more distinctly he discerns his own defects.

If the angels know anything of our prayers, and are at all attentive to our subsequent dispositions, they must think it strange that a creature who asks God to help him to pray, should afterwards feel as proud of his perform-

* Gurnall.

ance as though he had avowedly accomplished his duty without assistance.

If a man live a month, and "grow in grace," he is not unlikely to be ashamed in June of what made him proud in May.

There is the greater need for a Christian to be on his guard against self-gratulation, because there is too much truth in the allegory, "Other sins keep company with their fellows, but pride sometimes aspires to a place among the graces."*

What a strange matter it is for a man to be proud of an offering on which God would never look if it were not presented by "his own Son," and which Jesus cannot present till it is first washed in his own blood!

It is not impossible to find men who would think the Pharisee's prayer a much better prayer than that of the poor publican. All who undertake to praise young Christians for their prayers are not wiser than some who undervalue them.

What can be more disgusting than a beggar's boastings of his *tact* in solicitation?

"How unbeseeming a sin is pride in any that live upon mercy! Mercy, our highest happiness, calls loudest for a lowly heart. Sins against mercy are double-dyed. Every deliverance is a bill of indictment against the unthankful."†

* Anon. † Jenkins.

"The manna bred worms; so delightful seasons may generate pride."*

"If God smile, and open himself a little familiarly to us, then we are prone to grow high and wanton; and if he frown, then we sink as much in our faith. Thus the one, like fair weather and warm gleams, brings up the weeds of corruption; and the other, like sharp frosts, nips, and even kills, the flowers of grace."†

"When Tamerlin had taken Bajazet, among other questions he asked him if ever he had given God thanks for making him so great an emperor. He confessed immediately that he never thought of that: to whom Tamerlin replied, 'Tis no wonder so ungrateful a man should be made a spectacle of misery.' Oh! what do they then deserve that are unthankful for spiritual favours!"‡

One of the more probable methods to spoil the prayer we shall next offer is to be proud of the last.

It is at least worth a suppliant's while to wait and see whether his prayer be answered, before he is proud of it.

"It is safer to be humble with one talent than

* Rev. R. Adams. † Gurnall.
‡ Brooks.

proud with ten; yea, better to be an humble worm than a proud angel."*

When a man has learned the plague of his own heart, the best thing he can do is to ask Him to cleanse it who has made manifest its imperfection; and it may be washed; for "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth. 2 Cor. x. 18.

An high look is sin. Prov. xxi. 4.

Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer. Prov. xxv. 4.

As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold, so *is* a man to his praise. Prov. xxvii. 21.

Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift, is like clouds and wind without rain. Prov. xxv. 4.

Happy is the man that feareth alway. Prov. xxviii. 14.

Remove far from me vanity. Prov. xxx. 8.

I have seen an end of all perfection. Ps. cxix. 96.

The thought of foolishness is sin. Prov. xxiv. 9.

Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall 1 Cor. x. 12.

God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty . . . . that no flesh might glory in his presence. 1 Cor. i. 27, 29.

Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased. Luke, xiv. 11.

* Flavel.

Herod was ruined by not giving glory to God for the gifts he had bestowed. Acts, xii. 23.

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 1 John, ii. 1.

XLI.—ON DEPRESSION AFTER PRAYER.

We talk of being humbled for our sins—what think we of our duties? Can we reflect even upon our holy things, even upon our prayers themselves, and not cry, "Enter not into judgment with thy servants, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified."—REV. W. JAY.

IT is not uncommon for the servants of God to be dispirited after their most effective efforts. Samson feared lest he should perish with thirst after slaying "heaps upon heaps" of the Philistines; and David—after that achievement which most eminently evinced the piety, the benevolence, and the magnanimity of his character—said in his heart, "I shall now one day fall by the hand of Saul."

The more piety and good sense are mingled in the character, the more likely is it that, after any religious effort, there will be a consciousness of its imperfection; but a man must have some light if he discern his own imperfections, and some feeling if he lament them before God. "The soul, I believe, is never safer than when

with returning Mary, we stand at the feet of Christ, behind him weeping."*

It is not likely that "the publican" thought he had prayed well; nor that the Pharisee was sensible of the defects in his oration.

It is much better that a prayer-leader should be lamenting his own imperfections, than that all should be lamenting them but himself.

Each of Ezekiel's seraphim had wings with which "he covered his face."

As "by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better," it is possible to derive some profit from depression after prayer; so it is also possible to receive answers to a prayer in which the tongue has not been at liberty. If the failure in a religious service have been occasioned by previous neglect, or unrepented sin, the depression which brings these to remembrance may prove to be a blessing of distinguished value.

"God may sometimes communicate less of his assisting strength, that he may shew the more of his supporting strength in upholding the weak."†

"When we trust in frames and feelings, as soon as they are gone, the soul is discouraged and dejected; but when we trust in God's promises, which are always the same, then it is that we are right."*

* Toplady. † Gurnall.

"That man has no great reason to complain of desertions who can by them take advantage to improve his graces, and raise himself by his very fall."†

Though there may be instances in which depression is rather the result of disappointed than of *repented* pride, there are also cases in which it proves that its subject is one of that "people Israel which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward the temple of God." The latter kind of depression is a just tribute to the Divine purity and wisdom; and it will prove an effective inducement to an humble application for pardoning mercy through Christ. "I cannot," says Bishop BEVERIDGE, "pray, but I sin—nay, I cannot so much as confess my sins, but my very confessions of them are still aggravations of them; my repentance needs to be repented of, my tears want washing, and the very washing of my tears needs still to be washed over again with the blood of my Redeemer."

"Man's owning his weakness is the only stock for God thereon to graft the grace of his assistance."‡

* Romaine. † Bp. Wilkins. ‡ Dr. T. Fuller.

"Perhaps you are ready to say, 'I am afraid I am not a child of God, because I am so dull and lifeless, my prayers are so cold and dead.' This is the method which God takes to make you discontented with yourself, your duties and performances, and to make you look at Christ as your all."*

WHITFIELD was in a good state of mind when he said, "I am sick of all that I do, and stand astonished that the Redeemer still continues to make use of and bless me."

"The design of the Gospel is to break hard hearts, and heal broken hearts."†

ILLUSTRATIONS.

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 2 Cor. xii. 7.

Whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Eph. v. 13.

Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips. Prov. xxvii. 2.

Ye sorrowed to repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly manner. 2 Cor. vii. 9.

* Romaine. † Newton.

XLII.—ON THE EFFECT WHICH PRAYER SHOULD PRODUCE ON THE LIFE, AND THE CONDUCT TO WHICH A PRAYER-LEADER IS PLEDGED.

It is sad when after spiritual enlargements, and the performance of spiritual duties, believers are off their guard.—GURNALL.

THE *world*—which tolerates vice less willingly (even among its own class) in a public speaker than in any other man—has a right to expect that the persons who reprove its apathy by their greater attention to worship, and who condemn its sins by their pleadings for its renovation, should themselves be men of righteous character. "If the salt have lost its savour, it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot."

The *church* has a right to expect that its leading characters should be persons who do not at other times degrade their profession. When a man has allowed his voice to be heard in public prayer, he has motives to holiness of deportment even in addition to those of the silent worshipper. He must endeavour to cultivate a becoming demeanour in his family and in society, or he will dishonour the body which has allowed him to become its advocate.

The *minister* who selects his "helpers" in the religious services of the church has a right to

expect that they should "walk worthy of the high vocation with which they are called." The call to conduct the public devotions of the body of Christ involves an expression of confidence in the consistency of the person invited; and this confidence demands an honourable effort to sustain, by a proper demeanour, the character and the judgment of him who has made the selection of his fellow-labourer for the truth.

GOD OVER ALL is saying, "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear; forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ." 1 Pet. i. 17.

"If when you had any religious duty before you, He hath prepared your heart according to the preparation of the sanctuary, and while you were engaged in it hath touched your lips and heart as with a live coal from the altar,—surely the least return you can make for this seasonable support is, to resolve with the Psalmist, 'I will run the way of thy commandments when thou hast enlarged my heart.'"*

* Lavington.

It is the natural tendency of prayer to produce an effect upon the subsequent conduct. "He who has acquired an experimental knowledge of this duty, knows that nothing so forcibly restrains from ill as the remembrance of a recent address to heaven for protection and assistance. After having petitioned for power to resist temptation, there is so great an incongruity in not continuing the struggle that we blush at the thought, lest we lose all reverence for ourselves. After fervently devoting ourselves to God, we start with horror at the idea of immediate apostasy; every act of deliberate wickedness is then complicated with hypocrisy and ingratitude; it is a mockery of the Father of mercy; the forfeiture of that peace in which we closed our address, and a renunciation of the hope that it inspired. For a proof of this, let every man ask himself, as in the presence of Him who 'searches the heart,' whether he has never been deterred from prayer by his fondness for some criminal gratification which he could not afterwards repeat without greater compunction."*

"After great manifestations of the love of God, it is usual for the tempter to be unusually busy. So weak is the constitution of grace below, that we cannot of ourselves bear either

* Adventurer.

the smiles or the frowns of God without some degree of danger."*

"He whose religion lies all in prayer and hearing hath none at all."†

"A man may be every day on the exchange, and there talk diligently and earnestly about trade and merchandise, but when he comes home, he thinks no more of them, having no interest in them; and may also be very poor, notwithstanding all his talk and parade. So he may be spiritually very poor who on occasion is fervent in prayer, if when he retires he is not careful about the matter, and diligent for an interest in it."‡

"If a person were to attend the levee of an earthly prince every court-day, and pay his obedience punctually and respectfully, but at other times speak in opposition to his sovereign, the king would justly deem such an one a hypocrite and an enemy."§

"It is a sure evidence that our thoughts of spiritual things in prayer are from an internal and gracious spring, when we find the daily fruit of them, especially in promoting a watchful, humble, holy frame of mind. Innumerable are the advantages and effects of prayer; growth

* Anon. † Dr. Owen.
‡ Dr. Owen. § Rev. Rowland Hill.

in grace and consolation is the substance of them."*

"Special mercies call for special duties; as they that hold the largest farms must pay the largest rent."†

On many accounts it is to be lamented when persons of respectable character, and especially if well educated and of influential station, are unwilling to engage in the services of the prayer-meeting; but for their own sakes, it is particularly to be regretted. Every act by which a man increases the difficulty of neglecting or rejecting the religion of Jesus Christ is of much importance to himself. The person who would not wander from the paths of rectitude will wisely strive to thicken the hedge of thorns by which he may be prevented from going astray. The goads which would prevent the narcotic influence of enchanted ground should be sharpened in the moment of wakefulness, if we would not sleep the sleep of eternal death. "If," says the judicious FOSTER, "a man's judgment is really decided, let him commit himself irretrievably by doing something which shall compel him to do more, which shall necessitate him to do all." The act of praying in the presence of the church

* Dr. Owen. † Dyer.

is indeed an act which pledges the prayer-leader to a subsequent consistency of conduct; but for this very reason it is the more important that a being who is to stand "before the judgment-seat of Christ," should endeavour to engage in it as soon as may be lawfully and profitably practicable.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician heal thyself. Luke, iv. 23.

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. Psalm cxxxvii. 5.

Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. 2 John, 8.

The heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. Ezekiel, xxxvi. 23.

When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back. Psalm lvi. 9.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. Isaiah, i. 11.

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. Isaiah, xl. 31.

And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear. 1 Peter, i. 17.

In the name of our God we will set up our banners. Psalm xx. 5.

XLIII.—ON OBJECTIONS TO PRAYER-MEETINGS.

No man hath hitherto beene so impious, as plainely and directley to condemne Prayer. The best stratageme that Sathan hath, who knoweth his kingdome to be no one way more shaken, than by the publique deuout Prayers of God's Church, is by traducing the forme and manner of them, to bring them into contempt, and so to shake the force of all men's deuotion towards them.—HOOKER.

If prayer-meetings could not be objected to, or perverted to improper uses, they would present exceptions to a general rule, from which it could hardly be expected that they should be excluded. Whatever man is employed in—otherwise than by Divine inspiration—is liable to imperfection. If we must sacrifice every institution which unwise or wicked men have perverted to unholy purposes, we must have no churches, no colleges, no ministry, no hospitals, no government, and no laws.

Some prayer-leaders may have miscalculated their own qualifications, or have given utterance to expressions to which men of correct taste would naturally object; some of them may have proved the troublers of the churches, in the pride of their fancied gifts; such persons may have despised the ministry of a NEWTON himself; and wickedly hurried their way to the pulpits for which they were unprepared: but these are not conclusive reasons for depriving

others of the sacred privilege of meeting for prayer. It is not just to reduce Christian laymen, whom the "inspiration of God" terms "kings and priests unto God," below the level of laymen under the old covenant, because wicked professors have abused their privileges; still less are real Christians warranted to sneer at the prayers of a poor man, because he has not learned the lessons of the schools. The good JOHN NEWTON seldom appeared to greater advantage as a follower of the blessed JESUS, than when, instead of haughtily resenting the insults which he is said to have received, he wrote the following passage: "Complaints of this kind are frequent, and might perhaps be remedied, if the persons chiefly concerned were spoken to in love. But as they are usually the last who hear of it, it may perhaps be of service to communicate a few remarks on a subject of such general concern."* It would be wise in eminent Christians and Christian ministers to endeavour to *purify* rather than to *destroy* what God has honoured as an eminent means of reviving his church.

Let prayer-leaders, however, beware how they give *just* occasion for the censures of their critics. They cannot, indeed, expect to please the wicked by any actions which remind such of their own

* Letters of Omicron and Vigil.

guilt; but it would be lamentable to have afforded an apparent reason for the aversion to prayer-meetings which some good and great men have evinced. It is true that they should distinguish between the *exception* and the *rule*—the use and the abuse of such engagements; but what Christian would not be unhappy if *he* had given occasion to a prejudice, the effects of which are to be proclaimed as long as the writings of those whom he has pained shall continue? Let prayer-leaders be holy, harmless, undefiled, and it will be seen and known, that if such things have occurred, such things are not now; or, at least, delinquents will be marked men,—"their sin will find them out;" and if they must shew their gifts in connexion with so much impurity, they will be left to shew them to men of their own stamp, from whose society it is a happy circumstance for any Christian Church to be delivered.

It is profitable to endeavour to realize advantage from the prejudices of our friends, and the raging of our foes; neither the unbidden barking of the shepherd's dog, nor the howling of the wolf, will harm the sheep of Christ, if these only "drive them nearer to the fold, and nearer to the shepherd."

Thousands of prayer-leaders *are* exemplary in

their deportment, supporters of New Testament discipline, the best friends of their ministers, the "excellent of the earth," and the destined inhabitants of heaven. Happy is the Christian pastor who has his quiver full of such. May these be multiplied in the land! May it please God to bless this little book as the means of adding to their number! May it be the reader's anxiety that the increase of his gifts may prove a blessing and not a curse to the churches, a defence and not an objection to the meetings of Christians for social and public prayer. Amen.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Peter, ii. 12.

So is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. 1 Peter, ii. 15.

Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. 1 Peter, iii. 16.

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified, &c. 1 Peter, iv. 11.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Galatians, v. 1.

Let not then your good be evil spoken of. Romans, xiv. 16.

APPENDIX A.

TERMS AND EXPRESSIONS EMPLOYED IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES TO DESCRIBE OR CHARACTERIZE THE ACT OF PRAYING TO GOD.

PRAYING

IS

Abundantly uttering the memory of God's great goodness. Psalm cxlv. 7.
Acknowledging God. Proverbs, iii. 6.
Acknowledging our offences. Hosea, vi. 15.
Acknowledging sins unto God. Psalm xxxii. 5.
Acknowledging thine iniquity. Jer. iii. 13.
Acknowledging transgression. Psalm li. 3.
Appearing before God. Psalm xlii. 2.
Approaching to God. Psalm lxv. 4.
Ascribing strength unto God. Psalm lxviii. 34.
Asking anything according to his will. 1 John, v. 14.
Asking counsel of God. 1 Sam. xiv. 37.
Asking help of the Lord. 2 Chron. xv. 3, xx. 4.
Asking bread of a father. Luke, xi. 11.
Asking in faith. James, i. 6.
Asking in prayer, believing. Matt. xxi. 22.
Asking life for them that sin not unto death. 1 John, v. 16.
Asking of God. James, i. 5.
Asking of God the ordinances of justice. Is lviii. 2.

Asking, seeking, knocking. Matt. vii. 7.
Asking of the Father in Christ's name. John, xvi. 27.
Asking the way to Zion, with the face thitherward. Jer. l. 5.
Attending upon the Lord. 1 Cor. vii. 35.
Beseeching the Lord. 2 Kings, xiii. 4.
Blessing God, even the Father. James, iii. 7.
Blessing God in the congregation. Psalm lxviii. 26.
Blessing his holy name. Psalm cxlv. 21.
Blessing the Lord. Psalm xxvi. 12.
Blessing with the Spirit. 1 Cor. iv. 16.
Bowing down before the Lord our Maker. Ps. xcv. 6.
Bowing the knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Eph. iii. 14.
The believer, Breathing. Lam. iii. 56.
Bringing the Lord's offering. Zeph. iii. 9, 10.
Bringing the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord. Jer. xxxiii. 11.
By Christ, offering the sacrifice of praise to God. Heb. xiii. 15.
Calling in trouble. Psalm lxxxi. 7.
Calling on the Father. 1 Peter, i. 17.
Calling on the name of the Lord. Acts, xxii. 16.
Calling unto the Lord. Judges, xvi. 28.
Calling upon God. Is. lv. 6.
Calling upon the name of the Lord. 1 Kings, xviii. 21.
Calling upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. 1 Cor. i. 2.
Calling upon and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit. Acts, vii. 59.
Calling upon him in truth. Psalm cxiv. 18.
Coming and worshipping Christ. See Matt. xv. 25.
Coming boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Heb. iv. 16.

Coming, even to his seat. Job, xxiii. 3.
Coming to appear before God. Is. i. 12.
Coming to God. Heb. ii. 6.
Coming to the Lord, *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and* precious. 1 Peter, ii. 4.
Coming unto God by Christ. Heb. vii. 25.
Coming with weeping and supplications. Jer. xxxi. 9.
Commending *ourselves or others* to God, and the word of his grace. Acts, xx. 32.
Committing our cause unto God. Job, v. 8.
Committing our way unto God. Psalm xxxvii. 4.
Committing ourselves unto God. Psalm x. 14.
Compassing the altar of God. Psalm xxvi. 6.
Confessing and worshipping the Lord God. Neh. ix. 3.
Confessing to God. Romans, xv. 9.
Confessing transgression. Psalm xxxii. 5.
Confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus. Rom. x. 9.
Continuing with one accord in prayer and supplication. Acts, i. 14.
Crying, Abba, Father. Rom. viii. 15.
The Cry of the humble. Psalm ix. 12.
Crying, Thou, my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Psalm xxvii. 7.
Crying day and night before God. Psalm lxxxviii. 1.
Crying unto the Lord. Psalm cvii. 28.
Crying out unto the Lord. Ex. xiv. 10.
Crying out and shouting. Lam. iii. 8.
Crying to heaven. 2 Chron. xxxii. 20.
Crying with the voice. Psalm xxvii. 7.
Declaring God's greatness. Psalm cxlv. 6.
The desire of those that fear God. Psalm cxlv. 19.
Disputing with God. Job, xxiii. 7.
Drawing near to God. Psalm lxxiii. 28.

Drawing near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. Heb. x. 22.
Drawing nigh to God. James, iv. 8.
The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man. James, v. 16.
Engaging the heart to approach unto God. Jer. xxx. 21.
Enquiring of the Lord. 1 Sam. xxii. 10.
Entering into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way. Heb. x. 19, 20.
Exalting the Lord our God. Psalm xcix. 9.
Extolling and honouring the King of Heaven. Dan. iv. 37.
Extolling the Lord. Psalm xxxi. 1.
Extolling him with the tongue. Psalm lxvi. 17.
Having the eyes unto God. Psalm cxli. 8.
The eye mourning by reason of affliction. Psalm lxxxviii. 9.
The eye pouring out tears unto God. Job, xvi. 20.
The eye having respect to the Holy One of Israel. Is. xvii. 7.
Falling down before the Lord. Deut. ix. 25.
Fearing God in the assembly of the saints. Psalm lxxxix..
Filling the mouth with arguments before God. Job, xxiii. 4.
The freewill offerings of my mouth. Psalm cxix. 108.
The fruit of the lips. Heb. xiii. 15.
Gathering themselves together to ask *help* of the Lord. 2 Chron. xx. 4.
Giving thanks before his God. Dan. vi. 10.
Giving thanks unto the Lord. Psalm xcii. 1.
Giving thanks unto God and our Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Eph. v. 20.
Giving thanks to his name. Heb. xiii. 15.

Giving thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. Psalm xxx. 4.
Giving thanks well. 1 Cor. xiv. 16.
Giving praise, even with my glory. Psalm cviii. 1.
Glorifying God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. xv. 6.
Glorifying God. Ps. l. 23. See also 2 Cor. ix. 13, &c.
Glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen. Luke, ii. 20.
Glorifying God's name. Psalm lxxxvi. 9.
Glorifying the Lord. Acts, xxi. 20.
Going in and out, and finding pasture. John, x. 9.
Going unto our Father, and saying unto him, Father, &c. See Luke, xv. 18.
Going unto the altar of God. Psalm xliii. 4.
Greatly praising the Lord. Psalm cxlv. 3.
Greatly praising the Lord with my mouth. Ps. cix. 30.
The groaning of the prisoner. Psalm cii. 20. See also Ex. ii. 24.
Having access with confidence by the faith of Christ. Eph. iii. 12.
Having access by one Spirit unto the Father. Eph. ii. 18.
Having our eyes unto the Lord. Psalm cxli. 8.
The heart crying unto the Lord. Lam. ii. 18.
The heart inditing a good matter. Psalm xlv. 1.
Helping together by prayer to God. 2 Cor. i. 11.
Incense. Psalm cxli. 2.
Intercessions. 1 Tim. ii. 1.
Intreating the Lord. Ex. vii. 16; viii. 30; Judges, xiii. 8.
The knee bowing to God. Romans, xiv. 11.
The knee bowing, and the tongue swearing to God. Isaiah, xlv. 23.
Kneeling before the Lord our Maker. Psalm xcv. 6.

Knocking. Matt. vii. 7.
Labouring fervently in prayers. Col. iv. 12.
Lauding the Lord. Romans, xv. 11.
Letting our requests be made known unto God. Phil. iv. 6.
Letting the high praises of God be in our mouth. Psalm cxlix. 6.
Lifting up cries. Jer. vii. 16.
Lifting up a cry or prayer. Jer. xi. 14.
Lifting up mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh mine help. Psalm cxxi. 1.
The lifting up of my hands. Psalm cxli. 2.
Lifting up the hands in the Lord's name. Ps. lxiii. 4.
Lifting up the hands toward his holy oracle. Psalm xxviii. 2.
Lifting up the hands in the sanctuary, (*m.* in holiness,) and blessing the Lord. Psalm cxxxiv. 2.
Lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting. 1 Tim. ii. 8.
Lifting up the face unto God. Job, xxii. 26.
Lifting up the soul to God. Psalm lxxxvi. 4.
Lifting up the voice to God. Acts, iv. 24.
The lips praising God. Psalm lxiii. 3.
Looking again to the holy temple. Jonah, ii. 4.
Looking for the Lord. Isaiah, viii. 17.
Looking unto God. Isaiah, xlv. 22.
Looking to our Maker. Isaiah, xvii. 7.
Magnifying the Lord. Psalm xxxiv. 3.
Magnifying God with thanksgiving. Psalm lxix. 30.
Magnifying the Lord, and exalting his name. Psalm xxxiv. 3.
Making confession. Daniel, ix. 4.
Making intercession to God. Jer. vii. 16.
Making a joyful noise unto God. Psalm lxvi. 1.
Making mention of *brethren* in our prayers. 1 Thess. i 2.

Making request. Romans, i. 10.
Making your requests known unto God. Phil. iv. 6.
Making request with joy. Phil. i. 4.
Making supplication. Dan. vi. 11; Hos. xii. 4.
Making supplication unto the Lord with my voice. Psalm cxlii. 1.
Making the voice of God's praise to be heard. Psalm lxvi. 8.
Making thy supplication to the Almighty. Job, viii. 5.
Ministering "as of the ability which God giveth." 1 Peter, iv. 11.
Mourning in complaint, and making a noise. Ps. lv. 2.
The mouth being filled with God's praise, and with his honour. Psalm lxxi. 8.
The mouth praising God with joyful lips. Ps. lxiii. 5.
The mouth shewing forth God's praise. Psalm li. 15.
The mouth shewing forth God's righteousness *and* his salvation. Psalm lxxi. 16.
The mouth speaking the praise of the Lord. Ps. cxlv. 21.
My speech. Psalm xvii. 6.
My words. Psalm v. 1.
Odours. Rev. v. 8.
Offering praise. Psalm l. 23.
Offering sacrifices of joy (*m.* shouting.) Ps. xxvii. 6.
Offering the sacrifices of thanksgiving. Ps. cxvi. 17.
Offering the sacrifice of praise to God. Heb. xiii. 15.
Offering unto God thanksgiving. Psalm li. 14.
Offering up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 1 Peter, ii. 5.
The offering up of the Gentiles. Romans, xv. 16.
Opening our cause unto God. Jer. xx. 12.
Ordering *our* cause before him. Job, xxiii. 4.
The panting of the heart. Psalm xxxviii. 10.
Paying vows unto the Lord in the presence of hi people. Psalm cxvi. 14.

Performing the vow unto God. Psalm lxv. 1.
My petition which I asked of him. 1 Sam. i. 27.
The petitions that we desired of him. 1 John, v. 14.
Pleading with God. Jer. xii. 1.
Pouring out complaints before God. Psalm cxlii. 2.
Pouring out a prayer. Isaiah, xxvi. 16.
Pouring out the heart before him. Psalm lxii. 8.
Pouring out the soul. 1 Sam. i. 15.
Praising and thanking the Lord. 2 Chron. v. 13.
Praising God. Psalm lxvii. 3.
Praising God with uprightness of heart. Ps. cxix. 7.
Praising God with all the heart. Psalm lxxxvi. 12.
Praising God's name. Psalm lxxiv. 21.
Praising God's words in the Lord. Psalm lvi. 10.
Praising the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Ps. cvii.
Praising God's name for his loving-kindness and his truth. Psalm cxxxviii. 2.
Praising God's great and terrible name. Ps. xcix. 3.
Praising the Lord with the whole heart. Ps. cxi. 1.
The prayer of faith. James, v. 15.
The prayer of thy people. Psalm lxxx. 4.
The prayer of the righteous. Proverbs, xv. 29.
The prayer of thy servant. 1 Kings, viii. 28.
The prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee. 2 Chron. vi. 19.
Prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips. Ps. xvii. 1.
Praying earnestly. James, v. 17. (*m.* praying in prayer.)
Praying to God. 2 Cor. xiii. 7.
Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit. Eph. vi. 18.
Praying in the Holy Ghost. 1 John, v. 20.
Praying and making supplication before his God. Daniel, vi. 11.

Praying exceedingly. 1 Thess. iii. 10.
Praying God. Acts, viii. 22.
Presenting supplications before the Lord. Jer. xxxvi. 27.
Presenting yourselves before the Lord. 1 Sam. x. 19.
Publishing with the voice of thanksgiving, and telling of all God's wondrous works. Psalm xxvi. 7.
Putting God in remembrance. Isaiah, xliii. 26.
Reasoning with God. Job, xiii. 3.
Remembering the Lord. Jonah, ii. 7.
Rendering thanks to God again. 1 Thess. iii. 9.
Rendering the calves of the lips. Hos. xiv. 2.
The request of the lips. Psalm xxi. 2.
That which he requested. 1 Chron. iv. 10.
Your requests. Phil. iv. 6.
The sacrificing of the Gentiles. Rom. xv. 16. (*marg.*)
The sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name. Heb. xiii. 15.
Sacrifice to God acceptable through Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. ii. 5.
Sacrificing the sacrifices of thanksgiving. Psalm cvii. 22.
Saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Rev. xix. 6.
Saying, God be merciful to me, a sinner. Luke, xviii. 13.
Saying, I have sinned, and perverted right. Job, xxxiii. 26, 27.
Saying of the Lord, *He is* my refuge, and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Psalm xci. 2.
Saying unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? Psalm xlii. 9.
Saying unto the Lord, Thou art my God; hear the voice of my supplication. Psalm cxl. 6.
Still praising God. Psalm lxxxiv. 5.

Saying, that his mercy endureth for ever. Psalm cxviii. 1, 3.
Saying unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. Ps. lxvi. 2.
Searching for God with all your heart. Is. xxix. 13.
Secret speech. Isaiah, xxvi. 16. (*margin.*)
Seeking the face of the Lord. 2 Sam. xxi. 1. (*marg.*)
Seeking God. Psalm lxix. 32.
Seeking the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. Matthew, vi. 33.
Seeking the Lord. 2 Chron. xx. 3.
Seeking the Lord of Hosts. Isaiah, ix. 13.
Seeking unto God. Isaiah, viii. 19.
Serving God with reverence and godly fear. Hebrews, xii. 28.
Serving the Lord. Psalm cx. 2.
Serving God with my spirit in the gospel of his son. Romans, i. 9.
Setting himself to seek the Lord. 2 Chron. xx. 3.
Setting the face unto the Lord God. Daniel, ix. 3.
Setting your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God. 1 Chron. xxii. 19.
Shewing forth all God's marvellous works. Ps. ix. 1.
Shewing forth the loving-kindness of God. Ps. xcii. 2.
Shewing forth God's praises. Psalm li. 15.
Shewing forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. 1 Peter, ii. 9.
The sighing of the prisoner. Psalm lxxix. 11.
Sighing and crying for all the abominations that be done in the midst of Jerusalem. Ezekiel, ix. 4.
The soul magnifying the Lord, and the spirit rejoicing in God our Saviour. Luke, i. 46, 47.
The soul waiting on God. Psalm lxii. 1.

Speaking. Isaiah, lxvi. 24.
Speaking as the oracles of God. 1 Peter, iv. 11.
Speaking to the Almighty. Job, xiii. 3.
Speaking of his glory. Psalm xxix. 9.
Speaking of the glorious honour of his majesty, and of his wondrous works. Psalm cxlv. 5.
Speaking of the glory of his kingdom. Ps. cxlv. 11.
Speaking the praise of the Lord. Psalm cxlv. 21.
The Spirit itself making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Romans, viii. 26.
The Spirit of his Son in your hearts crying, Abba, Father. Gal. iv. 6.
Spreading forth the hands towards the temple. 1 Kings, viii. 38.
Standing afar off, the publican would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. Luke, xvi. 13.
Standing before the Lord. See Gen. xviii. 22.
Stirring up himself to take hold on God. Is. lxiv. 7.
Stretching forth the hands to God. Psalm lxviii. 31.
Stretching out the hands daily unto God. Psalm lxxxviii. 9.
Striving with God. Col. iv. 12.
Strong crying. Heb. v. 7.
Supplication. Psalm lv. 1.
Supplication in the Spirit. Eph. vi. 18.
The supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel. 1 Kings, viii. 30.
Swearing unto the Lord. Psalm cxxxii. 2.
Taking hold of God. Isaiah, lxiv. 7.
Taking with you words, and turning to the Lord, &c. Hosea, iv. 2.
Talking of God's power. Psalm cxlv. 11.
Talking with God of his judgments. Jer. xii. 1.
Thanking my God through Jesus Christ. Rom. i. 8.

Thank fulness to God. Psalm c. 4.
Thanksgiving to God. 2 Cor. ix. 11.
The tongue talking of God's righteousness. Psalm lxxi. 24.
The tongue confessing to God. Romans, xiv. 11.
Triumphing in God's praise. Psalm cvi. 47.
Turning to the Lord. Psalm xxii. 27.
Two of you agreeing on earth as touching anything that they shall ask. Matt. xviii. 19.
Uttering the memory of God's goodness. Ps. cxlv. 7.
Uttering the mighty acts of the Lord. Psalm cvi. 2.
Visiting God. Isaiah, xxvi. 6.
The voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, &c. See Rev. xix. 6.
The voice of joy and praise. Psalm xlii. 4.
The voice of my cry. Psalm v. 2.
The voice of my prayer. Psalm lxvi. 19.
The voice of rejoicing and salvation. Ps. cxviii. 15.
The voice of my supplication. Psalm cxxx. 2.
The voice of my weeping. Psalm vi. 8.
The voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts. Jer. xxxiii. 11.
Vowing a vow unto God. Eccl. v. 4.
Vows. Psalm lxi. 5.
Vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. Psalm lxvi. 14.
Waiting at the altar. 1 Cor. ix. 13.
Waiting for God. Isaiah, xlix. 23.
Waiting on God's name. Psalm lii. 9.
Waiting on the Lord. Psalm xxv. 21.
Waiting only upon God. Psalm lxii. 7.
Watching in prayer with thanksgiving. Col. iv. 2.
Weeping, and making supplication. Hosea, xii. 4.
Weeping before the Lord. Deut. i. 45.

What prayer or what supplication soever shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his own sore and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house. 2 Chron. vi. 29.
The words of my mouth. Psalm liv. 2.
The words of my roaring. Psalm xxii. 1.
Words wherewith I have made supplication before the Lord. 1 Kings, viii. 59.
Worship. Gen. xxii. 5.
Worshipping God. Acts, xvi. 14.
Worshipping at his footstool. Psalm cxxxiii. 7.
Worshipping before the Lord. 1 Sam. i. 19.
Worshipping and bowing down. Psalm xcv. 6.
Worshipping Christ. Matthew, xxviii. 9.
Worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth. John, iv. 23.
Worshipping the God of our fathers. Acts, xxiv. 14.
Worshipping the Lord thy God. Luke, iv. 8.
Worshipping the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Psalm xxix. 2.
Worshipping toward his holy temple. Ps. cxxxviii. 2.
Worshipping God in the spirit. Phil. iii. 3.
Worshipping at his footstool. Psalm xcv. 5.
Worshipping the King, the Lord of Hosts. Zech. xiv. 16.
Wrestling with God. Gen. xxxii. 28.

APPENDIX B.

HINTS ON THE SEVERAL PARTS OF PRAYER.

I.—INVOCATION, OR CALLING ON THE NAME OF GOD.

> ——Where shall I seek thy presence?
> How unblamed invoke thy dread perfection?
>
> BARBAULD.

DEVOUT invocation prepares the mind for every part of devotion, and therefore properly constitutes the first part of a prayer. It is not, however, necessarily confined to the introduction, but may be profitably repeated.

In the Lord's prayer, invocation is used in the first sentence, and the name of God is not again employed, (except as implied in the pronouns *thy* and *thine;*) but, in the Psalms, the invocation is often repeated in the same prayer. See Psalms iii. iv. v. vi., and *many* others.

The Holy One is sometimes invoked by various names in the same Psalm. The probable design, both of the change and the repetition,

was the excitement of renewed confidence and reverence.

The names by which it has pleased God to reveal himself are eminently worthy of constant reflection, not only as they suggest the expressions which it is proper to employ in His service, but because their solemn and merciful import is so likely to affect a renewed heart.

In every state of mind, in every stage of life, and in every change of circumstances, the names of God are astonishingly calculated to excite becoming thoughts in prayer.

While it is important to avoid giving occasion to the charge, that we use the Holy Name for the mere purpose of gaining time for reflection in prayer, it is also of consequence that the Christian should not, by unjust criticisms, be deprived of a privilege which even the literal Israel enjoyed; and it *is* a privilege to have the attention frequently directed to the names of God in prayer. *Some* persons may employ the name of the Lord for unhallowed or unworthy purposes; but those who have widely different intentions should not be forbidden to imitate inspired compositions.

A person who has studied the names of God as they occur in scripture will not be obliged to invent others for the purposes of worship.

SCRIPTURE NAMES OF GOD.

Abba, Father. Gal. iv. 6.
The Almighty. Gen. iv. 6 ; Rev. i. 8.
The Almighty God. Gen. xvii. 1.
Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending. Revelations, i. 8.
The Amen. Rev. iii. 14.
Blessed God. 1 Tim. i. 11.
Blessed and only Potentate. 1 Tim. vi. 15.
My Buckler. Psalm xviii. 2.
He that chasteneth the heathen. Psalm xciv. 10.
The Confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea. Psalm lxxv. 5.
Counsellor. Isaiah, ix. 6.
Creator. Eccl. xii. 1.
The Creator of Israel, your King. Isaiah, xliii. 15.
Creator of the ends of the earth. Isaiah, xl. 28.
The Creator, who is blessed for ever. Romans, i. 25.
Our Defence. Psalm lxxxix. 18.
The Deliverer. Romans, xi. 26.
Eternal God. Deut. xxxiii. 27.
The Everlasting Father. Isaiah, ix. 6.
The Everlasting God. Gen. xxi. 33.
Faithful Creator. 1 Peter, iv. 19.
Faithful God. Deut. viii. 9.
Father of all. Eph. iv. 6.
Father of glory. Eph. i. 17.
Father of lights. James, i. 17.
Father of mercies. 2 Cor. i. 3.
Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows. Psalm lxviii. 5.
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans, xv. 16.
The Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work. 1 Peter, i. 17.
The Former of all things. Jer. x. 16.

He that formed the ear. Psalm xciv. 9.
The Fountain of living waters. Jer. ii. 13.
The Glorious Lord. Isaiah, xxviii. 21.
God. Gen. i. 1 ; Matt. xix. 17.
God Almighty. Gen. xxviii. 3.
God, and not man. Hosea, xi. 9.
God alone. Psalm lxxxvi. 10.
God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory. Eph. i. 17.
The Godhead. Acts, xvii 29.
God himself that formed the earth and made it. Is. xlv. 18.
God Most High. Psalm lvii. 2.
The God of all comfort. 2 Cor. i. 3.
God of all grace. 1 Peter, v. 10.
God of all the families of Israel. Jer. xxxi. 1.
God of Bethel. Gen. xxxi. 13.
God, even the Father. 1 Cor. xv. 24.
God, even our own God. Psalm lxvii. 6.
God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. xv. 6.
God, even thy God. Psalm i. 7.
God, full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. Ps. lxxxvi. 15.
God in heaven. Deut. iii. 24.
God mine helper. Psalm liv. 4.
God my defence. Psalm lix. 9.
God my King of old. Psalm lxxiv. 12.
God my rock. Psalm xlii. 9.
God my exceeding joy. Psalm xliii. 4.
The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Exodus, iii. 6.
The God of Abraham, and of Nahor, the God of their Father. Gen. xxxi. 53.
God of consolation. Romans, xv. 5.

The God of David. Isaiah, xxxviii. 5.
God of glory. Acts, vii. 2.
God of gods. Deut. ix. 17.
The God of heaven and earth. Ezra, v. 11.
The God of hope. Romans, xv. 13.
God of hosts. Psalm lxxx. 7.
God of Israel. Exodus, xxiv. 10.
God of Israel, the Saviour. Isaiah, xlv. 15.
The God of Israel that giveth strength and power to his people. Psalm lxvii. 35.
God of judgment. Isaiah, xxx. 18.
God of knowledge. 1 Samuel, ii. 3.
God of the living. Matt. xxii. 32.
The God of love and peace. 2 Cor. xiii. 22.
God of my father. Acts, xxiv. 14.
The God of my life. Psalm xlii. 8.
The God of my mercy. Psalm lix. 17.
God of my praise. Psalm cix. 1.
God of my rock. 2 Samuel, xxii. 3.
God of my salvation. Habakkuk, iii. 18.
God of my strength. Psalm xliii. 2.
God that can deliver after this sort. Daniel, iii. 39.
God, that giveth liberally to all men, and upbraideth not. James, i. 5.
God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel the Saviour. Isaiah, xlv. 15.
God that is holy. Isaiah, v. 16.
God that made the world and all things therein. Acts, xvii. 24.
God that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage. Micah, vii. 18.
God that performeth *all things* for me. Psalm lvii. 2.
God that sat on the throne. Rev. xix. 4.
God the Father. Gal. i. 1.

God the judge of all. Hebrews, xii. 23.
The God of our fathers. Acts, xxii. 14.
God of our salvation. Psalm lxv. 5.
God of patience. Romans, xv. 5.
The God of salvation. Psalm lxviii. 28.
The God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Dan. iii. 29.
God of the whole earth. Isaiah, liv. 5.
The God of thy salvation. Isaiah, xvii. 10.
God of truth. Deut. xxxii. 4.
God only wise. Romans, xvi. 27.
God our Father. Romans, i. 7.
God our refuge and strength. Psalm xlvi. 1.
God our Saviour. Titus, ii. 10.
God over all. Rom. ix. 5.
God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness. Neh. ix. 17.
God that comforteth those that are cast down. 2 Cor. vii. 6.
The God that doest wonders. Psalm lxxvii. 14.
God that judgest in the earth. Psalm lviii. 11.
The God the holy, or, the holy God. Is. v. 16. (*marg.*)
God the Lord. Psalm lxviii. 20.
God the Lord, the strength of my salvation. Ps. cxi. 7.
God the Lord, which hath shewed us light. Psalm cxviii. 27.
God, thou God of my salvation. Psalm li. 14.
God to whom vengeance belongeth. Psalm xciv. 1.
God which keepeth covenant. Deut. vii. 9.
God which made Jeshurun. Deut. xxxii. 15.
The Good Lord. 2 Chron. xxx. 18.
Governor among the nations. Psalm xxii. 28.
Gracious and merciful God. Neh. ix. 31.
Gracious God. Jonah, iv. 2.
The Great God. Titus, ii. 13.

The great and dreadful God. Daniel, ix. 4.
The great God that formed all things. Prov. xxvi. 10.
The Great, the Mighty God. Jer. xxxii. 18.
The Lord of Hosts, great in counsel, and mighty in work. Jer. xxxii. 19.
Great King over all the earth. Psalm xlvii. 2.
The health of my countenance, and my God. Psalm xliii. 5.
Heavenly Father. Matt. vi. 32.
My Help and my Deliverance. Psalm lxx. 5.
Helper. Psalm liv. 4.
He that keepeth Israel. Psalm cxxi. 4.
He that took me out of the womb. Psalm xxii. 9.
Hiding-place. Psalm xxxii. 7.
High God. Daniel, iv. 2.
The High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. Is. lvii. 15.
The Highest. Psalm cxviii. 13; Luke, i. 32.
The Highest himself. Psalm lxxxvii. 5.
Higher than the highest. Eccl. v. 8.
High tower. Psalm xviii. 2.
Him. Job, xxiii. 2. (NOTE—*no antecedent name here.*)
Him that rideth upon the heaven of heavens. Psalm lxviii. 33.
Him who alone doeth great wonders. Psalm cxxxvi. 4.
Him that by wisdom made the heavens. Ps. cxxxvi. 5.
Him that stretched out the earth above the waters. 6.
Him that made great lights. 7.
Him that smote Egypt in their first born; and brought out Israel from among them; with a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm. 10, 11, 12.
Him which divided the Red sea into parts, and made Israel to pass through the midst of it, but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea. 13, 14, 15.
Him which led his people through the wilderness. 16.

Him which smote great kings; and slew famous kings; Sihon king of the Amorites; and Og king of Bashan; and gave their land for an heritage; an heritage unto Israel his servant: who remembered us in our low estate, and hath redeemed us from our enemies: who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever. See 17—25.
Him that is able to keep you from falling. Jude, 24.
Him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, &c. See Romans, xvi. 25.
Him that liveth for ever and ever. Rev. v. 14.
Him *who is* the health of my countenance and my God. Psalm xliii. 5.
Holy. Isaiah, lvii. 15.
Holy Father. John, xvii. 11.
The Holy Ghost. Acts, i. 8.
Holy God. Joshua, xxiv. 19.
The Holy. Proverbs, ix. 10.
Holy and reverend. Psalm cxi. 9.
Holy One. Isaiah, xl. 21.
The Holy One in the midst of thee. Hosea, xi. 9.
Holy One of Israel. Psalm lxxi. 20.
Holy One of Jacob. Isaiah, xxix. 23.
Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. Rev. iv. 8.
Hope of Israel. Jer. xiv. 8.
Horn of my salvation. 2 Sam. xxii. 3.
Husband. Isaiah, liv. 5.
I AM. Ex. iii. 14.
I AM THAT I AM. Ex. iii. 14.
Immanuel. Isaiah, vii. 14.
Immortal. 1 Tim. i. 17.
The Incorruptible God. Rom. i. 23.
Invisible. 1 Tim. i. 17.
Israel's Maker. Is. xlv. 11.

Israel's Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts. Is. xlv. 6.
I the first, and I the last. Is. xliv. 6.
JAH. Psalm lxviii. 4.
JEHOVAH. Isaiah, xxvi. 4.
Jehovah, the most High over all the earth. Psalm lxxxiii. 18.
Judge of the earth. Psalm xciv. 2.
Judge of all the earth. Gen. xviii. 25.
Judge of quick and dead. Acts, x. 42.
A just God, and a Saviour. Isaiah, xlv. 21.
The just Lord. Zeph. iii. 5.
That Just One. Acts, xxii. 14.
Thy Keeper. Psalm cxxi. 5.
The King. Psalm xx. 9.
King eternal, immortal, invisible. 1 Tim. i. 17.
King for ever and ever. Psalm x. 16.
King of all the earth. Psalm xlvii. 7.
King of glory. Psalm xxiv. 7.
King of heaven. Daniel, iv. 27.
King of kings. 1 Tim. vi. 15.
King of nations. Jer. x. 7.
King of saints. Rev. xv. 3.
The King, the Lord of Hosts. Isaiah, vi. 5.
Lawgiver. Isaiah, xxxiii. 22.
The Living Father. John, vi. 57.
The Living God. 1 Tim. iii. 15.
Lord. Gen. iv. 1.
Lord above all gods. Psalm cxxxv. 5.
The Lord Almighty. 2 Cor. vi. 18.
Lord God Almighty. Rev. xv. 3.
The Lord God, full of compassion, and gracious, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. Psalm lxxxvi. 15.
Lord God. Gen. ix. 26.
Lord God of Israel. Psalm xli. 13.

The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression, &c. See Ex. xxxiv. 69.
The Lord God of gods; the Lord God of gods. Josh. xxii. 22.
The Lord God of heaven. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 23.
Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel. 1 Kings, xviii. 36.
Lord God of Hosts. Psalm lxix. 6.
Lord God of my salvation. Psalm lxxxviii. 1.
Lord God of the holy prophets. Rev. xxiii. 6.
The Lord God Omnipotent. Rev. xix. 4.
The Lord God to whom vengeance belongeth, God to whom vengeance belongeth. Psalm xciv. 1.
The Lord God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; and foundest his heart faithful, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amarites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, and hast performed thy words; and didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry, &c. See Neh. ix. 7 to 15.
Lord, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. Ex. xv. 11.
Lord, great, and greatly to be praised. Psalm xxvi. 4.
Lord, high above all the earth. Psalm xcvii. 7.
The Lord JEHOVAH. Isaiah, xxvi. 4.
Lord Jesus. Acts, vii. 16.
The Lord my light and my salvation. Psalm xxvii. 1.
Lord my refuge. See Psalm xci. 9.
Lord of heaven and earth. Matt. xi. 25.
Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims. Is. xxxvii. 16.

Lord of hosts. 1 Sam. i. 11.
The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, a God to Israel. 1 Chron. xvii. 24.
Lord of lords. 1 Tim. vi. 15.
The Lord of peace himself. 2 Thess. iii. 16.
Lord of sabaoth. James, v. 4.
The Lord of the whole earth. Psalm xcvii. 5.
Lord on high. Psalm xciii. 4.
Lord our father, our redeemer. Psalm lxiii. 16.
Lord our God. 2 Chron. xxxii. 8.
The Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold *the things that are* in heaven, and in the earth. Psalm cxiii. 6.
Lord our Lord. Psalm viii. 1.
The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Psalm xxiv. 8.
The Lord that created the heavens. Isaiah, xlv. 18.
The Lord that is faithful. Isaiah, xlix. 7.
The Lord, the God of all flesh. Jer. xxxii. 27.
The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear; visiting, &c. See Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7.
The Lord the strength of my life. Psalm xxvii. 1.
Lord, the strength of my salvation. Psalm cxl. 7.
The Lord thy God, a mighty God and terrible. Deut. vii. 21.
The Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits. Psalm lxviii. 19.
The Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the Lord of Hosts is his name. Jer. xxxi. 35.

The Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way thou shouldest go. Is. xlviii. 17.
Lord our Maker. Psalm xcv. 6.
The Lord our righteousness. Jer. xxxii. 6.
Lord over Israel. 1 Chron. xxviii. 5.
The Lord, the judge. Judges, xi. 27.
The Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the mighty one of Israel. Isaiah, i. 24.
The Lord which hath shewed us light. Ps. cxxiii. 3.
The Lord which hallow you. Lev. xxii. 32.
The Lord which is, and which was, and which is to come. Rev. i. 8.
The Lord which made heaven and earth. Ps. cxv. 15.
The Lord which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters, which bringeth forth the chariot and the horse, &c. Isaiah, xliii. 16, 17.
The Lord who is worthy to be feared. Ps. xviii. 9.
The Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God. Lev. xxv. 38.
The Lord your Holy One. Isaiah, xliii. 15.
This glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD. Deut. xxviii. 58.
Thy Majesty. Psalm cxlv. 5.
Man's maker. Isaiah, xvii. 7.
Merciful God. Neh. ix. 31.
Mighty God. Genesis, xlix. 24.
Mighty God of Jacob. Psalm cxxxii. 2.
The Mighty God, the Lord of Hosts. Jer. xxxii. 18.
Mighty One of Israel. Isaiah, xxx. 29.
Most High. Luke, viii. 28.
Most High God. Genesis, xiv. 18.
Most High over all the earth. Psalm lxxxiii. 18.
My Buckler. Psalm xviii. 2.

My Deliverer. Psalm xviii. 2.
My (Jesus Christ's) Father which is in heaven. Matt. xviii. 19.
My Father, my God. Psalm lxxxix. 26.
My Fortress. Psalm xviii. 2.
My God. Psalm xxii. 1.
My God and my Lord. Psalm xxxv. 23.
My God from my mother's belly. Psalm xxii. 10.
My Goodness. Psalm cxliv. 2.
My High Tower. Psalm xviii. 2.
My King and my God. Psalm v. 2.
My Light. Psalm xxvii. 1.
My Lord, and my God. John, xx. 28.
My Redeemer. Job, xix. 25.
My Rock. Psalm xviii. 1.
My Salvation. Psalm xxvii. 1.
My Strength. Psalm xxii. 19.
One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. Eph. iv. 6.
One God, the Father, of whom are all things. 1 Cor. viii. 6.
Only Potentate. 1 Tim. vi. 15.
Only true God. John, xvii. 3.
Only wise God. Jude, 25.
Our Father, which art in heaven. Matt. vi. 9.
Our God. Heb. xii. 29.
Our God for ever and ever. Psalm xlviii. 14.
Our God, the God of salvation. Psalm lxviii. 20.
Our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God. Neh. ix. 32.
Our God which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved. Psalm lxvi. 9.
Our Redeemer. Isaiah, xlvii. 4.
Our Saviour. Titus, i. 3.
He that planted the ear. Psalm xciv. 9.

The Portion of Jacob. Jer. x. 16.
Potentate. 1 Tim. vi. 15.
Prince of peace. Isaiah, ix. 6.
Prince of the kings of the earth. Rev. i. 5.
Redeemer. Is. lix. 20.
Refiner. Mal. iii. 3.
Refuge. Isaiah, xxv. 4.
Righteous Father. John, xvii. 5.
The Righteous Lord. Psalm cxi. 7.
Rock. Psalm xviii. 46.
Rock of Israel. 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.
Rock of my refuge. Psalm xciv. 22.
Rock of my strength. Isaiah, xvii. 10.
Rock of our salvation. Psalm xcv. 1.
Ruler in Israel. Micah, v. 2.
The Salvation of Israel. Psalm xiv. 7.
Our Saviour. Titus, i. 3.
The Saviour. Isaiah, xlv. 15.
The Saviour of all men. 1 Tim. iv. 10.
The Saviour—especially of those that believe. 1 Tim. iv. 10.
Shade. Psalm cxxi. 5.
Shepherd of Israel. Psalm lxxx. 1.
Shepherd of the sheep. Heb. xiii. 20.
Shield. Psalm lix. 11.
Sion's king. Matt. xxi. 5.
My Strength. Psalm lix. 11.
The Strength of Israel. 1 Sam. xv. 29.
My Strong Habitation. Psalm xci. 9.
My Strong Refuge. Psalm lxxiii. 9.
A Strong Tower. Prov. xviii. 10.
He that teacheth man knowledge. Psalm xciv. 10.
The God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Acts, vii. 32.
The God of love and peace. 2 Cor xiii. 11.

The Lord thy God that teachest thee to profit. Isaiah, xlviii. 17.
Their own God. Dan. iii. 28.
Thou, most upright. Isaiah, xxvi. 7.
Thou, my Help and my Deliverer. Psalm lxx. 5.
Thou that dwellest between the cherubim. Ps. lxxx. 1.
Thou that dwellest in the heavens. Psalm cxxiii. 1.
Thou Preserver of men. Job, vii. 20.
Thou that hearest prayer. Psalm lxv. 2.
Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death. Psalm ix. 13.
Thou that savest, by thy right hand, them which trust in thee. Psalm xvii. 7.
Thy Creator. Eccl. xii. 1.
True God. 1 Thess. i. 9.
The Unknown God. Acts, xvii. 23.
The very God of peace. 1 Thess. v. 23.
Who giveth food to all flesh. Psalm cxxxvi. 25.
Who remembered us in our low estate. Ps. cxxxvi. 23.
Wonderful. Isaiah, ix. 6.
Your Father which is in heaven. Matt. vii. 11.
Your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities, and your tribulations. 1 Sam. x. 19.
Your Heavenly Father. Matt. vi. 32.
Zion's God. Isaiah, lii. 7.

NOTE.—In using the above, it will be proper to select such names of God as are most suited to the circumstances and character of the persons who employ them. There is a remarkable *appropriateness* in the invocations of Scripture. The study of these expressions will, however, also afford many other valuable benefits to an inquiring and prayerful mind.

II.—ADORATION, OR PAYING HONOUR TO GOD.

We find it usual with the saints, whose prayers are recorded in Scripture, to be ample in setting forth the glorious perfections of God in the beginning of their prayers. — GOUGE.

ADORATION properly follows the act of invoking or calling upon God, and is used in that order in the Lord's prayer.

After making mention of the name of the Lord, we should immediately employ our thoughts in contemplating and expressing what we know of his glorious character. This part of worship should not be delayed, though it may be profitably repeated in other parts of the prayer.

The thought of what God is, and of what he does, is wonderfully calculated to fix the mind, to inspire reverence, to encourage faith, and to call forth every remembrance essential to prayer.

The prayer of the Levites, mentioned Neh. ix., chiefly consisted of adoration and confession.

The distinctions between Adoration, Praise, and Blessing, are so minute, as rarely to demand the observance of ordinary worshippers; and indeed some eminent divines class them all under the same general divisions of prayer. On this principle, and contemplating the beginning and termination of the Lord's Prayer, we meet with the following beautiful remarks:—"And if we

observed it, we may clearly perceive it as a circular line; as indeed the exercise of prayer is a heavenly motion, circular as that of the heavens, begins and ends in the same point, the glory of that God to whom we pray, and who is the God that heareth prayer. In that point this prayer begins, and afterwards ends in it; so that our requests that concern ourselves are cast in the middle, that all our desires may move within this circle: though the things we pray for concern ourselves, yet are not to terminate in ourselves, but in Him who is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of all things; to desire not only the blessings of this life, but the blessedness of the life to come, more for His glory than our own good."*

Dr. WATTS considered Adoration as containing "these four things:—

1. A mention of his nature as God;
2. The mention of his several attributes;
3. The mention of his several works; and
4. The mention of his relation to us."

The Doctor adds, "When we consider his nature, we stand afar off from him as creatures from a God, for he is infinitely superior to us; when we speak of his attributes, there seems to grow a greater acquaintance between God and

* Leighton.

us, while we tell him that we have learned something of his power, his wisdom, and his justice, and his mercy; but when we proceed to make mention of the several works of his hands, wherein he hath sensibly discovered himself to our understandings, we seem yet to approach nigher to God; and when at last we can arise to call him our God, from a sense of his special relation to us in Christ, then we gain the nearest access, and are better prepared for the following parts of this worship."

EXAMPLES OF ADORATION.

Thou, Lord, art most high for evermore. Ps. xcii. 8.

Thou art God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Is. xxxvii. 16.

Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Ex. xv. 11.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth, and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Ps. xc. 2.

Hallowed be thy name. Matt. vi. 9.

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Rev. iv. 11.

Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, &c. Rev. v. 9, 10.

To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Jude, 25.

Now, unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Phil. iv. 20.

Now, unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Ephesians, iii. 21.

Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let thy glory be above all the earth. Ps. lvii. 11.

I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. Ps. cxlv. 5.

Thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Ps. civ. 1.

To the only wise God, be honour and glory. 1 Tim. i. 17.

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power. Rev. iv. 11.

Alleluia, salvation, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God. Rev. xv. 2.

III. — CONFESSION.

Humility is, in suitors, a decent virtue.—HOOKER.

CONFESSION includes an acknowledgment of the meanness of our origin, the guiltiness of our hearts, the wickedness of our lives, the helplessness of our state, our unworthiness of mercy, and the imperfection of our graces.

Whatever place confession may take in the *arrangement* of a prayer, it will never be designedly *omitted* by those who "know every man the plague of his own heart."

"The way to see the length, depth, breadth, and height of God's mercies, is first with shame

and sorrow to see the depth, breadth, and height of our own sins."*

The absence of confession was one prominent defect in the prayer of the Pharisee mentioned by our Lord, while its employment constituted an important part of the brief but acceptable worship of the humbled publican.

It has been the invariable practice of regenerate men to acknowledge and lament their faults before the holy God.

Daniel, the man in whom infidels have been as much at a loss to find a fault as in any *merely* human being, could find faults enough in himself. "While I was praying and confessing my sins." See Dan. ix. 20.

For the purpose of understanding that law by which is the "knowledge of sin;" and to learn our own defects by the confessions of others, it will be of great service to consult the Holy Scriptures; but, as "we have turned every one to his own way," the study of our own hearts is of the next importance.

Except in those cases of flagrant immorality, the commission of which would commonly prevent an individual from being invited to conduct the prayers of others, reflections on our own defects will generally supply the painful and yet

* Anon.

proper remembrance of suitable topics of public lamentation. "As face answereth to face in a glass, so the heart of man to man."

It is extremely important that this part of the worship should be pursued with feelings of deep humiliation; for nothing can be more unseemly than the attempt to be "*lively*" in *such* an employment. It has been truly remarked of Jeremiah that his Lamentations would give the idea of a man "who never breathed without a sigh, nor spake without a groan;" and this is far higher commendation of the conduct of a penitent sinner, than the silly reputation of being "always *so* lively in prayer."

When men attend a prayer-meeting in the hope of excitement from natural causes, or from the mere desire of pleasant feelings, it may be a sad disappointment to be obliged to listen to the sorrowful expressions of grief for sin; but there is a "mystic joy in penitence," and a renewed mind will view the matter in another light. "Put thou my tears into thy bottle."

The merciful manifestation of the presence of God will not prevent a believer from lamenting his sin; for iniquity is never more hateful in *his* eyes than when the Lord is pleased to reveal his own essential goodness. "Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God;" and Job

"abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes," at the very periods when Divine mercy displayed the choicest of its stores. "It is light that maketh manifest."

The most rigid observers of order in prayer do not expect that each of its several parts should be extended to an equal length, or that there will not be times when some particular division of prayer shall be more fully attended to. There are seasons when the confession of sin may properly employ a larger portion of attention, and the following will rank among such:—

1. When the mind is oppressed with the consciousness of previously unrepented sin—as in Psalm li.

2. When the spirit is overwhelmed by contemplating the judgments of God on itself, on the church, on the nation, or on well-known individuals—as in the Lamentations of Jeremiah.

3. When remarkable interpositions of undeserved kindness from God are fresh upon the memory. "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." Job, xl.

4. When, under present difficulty, the mind is affected by the remembrance of undeserved mercies already bestowed. Gen. xxxii. 10.

5. When it is particularly important to "bring to remembrance." See Psalm xxxviii.

6. Whenever mercy is sought. Ps. li.; Ex. xxxii. 31.

7. When we would have God to remember his covenant. Lev. xxvi. 40, 42.

8. When we have sinned against God by a trespass against man. Num. v. 6, 7.

9. When sorrows have befallen the church through the sin of an individual. Josh. vii. 19.

10. When faithful preaching has affected the soul. 2 Sam. xii. 13.

11. When sin is found out by its punishment. 2 Sam. xxiv. 10.

12. When the judgments of God are manifestly impending. 1 Kings, xxi. 27, 29; 2 Kings, xxii. 19; Ps. xxxii.; Jer. xiv. 7, 20.

13. When men professing piety form unholy alliance with the wicked. Ezra, ix.

14. When pleading for the deliverance of the church. Neh. i. 7.

15. When unwatchfulness has prevented our bearing troubles well. Job, vii. 20.

16. Amidst the calamities of the church. Is. lix. 12; Psalm cxix. 53, 136, 158; Neh. xiii. 7.

17. When the wrath of God is revealed. Is. lxiv. 5, 7.

18. When we are degraded. Lam. v. 16.

19. On returning from a backsliding state. Jer. iii. 12. 13; 1 Sam. xii. 9, 10; Luke, xv. 18, 19, 21.

20. On believing in Jesus. Acts, xix. 18.

21. On seeking the renewal of forgiveness. 1 John, i. 8—10; James, iv. 9, 10.

IV. — PETITION.

His faithful people, whatsoever they rightly ask, the same shall they receive, so far as may stand with the glory of God and their everlasting good; unto either of which it is no virtuous man's purpose to seek anything prejudicial.—HOOKER.

PETITION is that part of prayer in which the suppliant implores for himself, and for others, the

benefits which God bestows upon men; and is therefore ever necessary in the present state. The prayer of the Pharisee was here again defective; he confessed no sins, he implored no blessings: he had no faults and no wants—at least, in his own eyes; and in these respects he singularly differed from the publican "who went down to his house justified rather than the other."

Petition without thanksgiving is ingratitude, but the man who praises without supplicating does not know his own wants, does not feel for his fellow-creatures, has no proper longing for the prosperity of Zion, and cannot be said to appreciate the character of the holy and merciful God.

Petition is a part of worship which recognises the hand of God in managing the affairs of men —accords with the rule by which we are taught to expect the blessing of the Most High—eminently prepares the mind for the reception of its blessings—and sweetens the mercies bestowed by the "God that heareth prayer."

In petition, as in confession, the circumstances under which the prayer is offered should always be considered. What is proper in private worship is not always becoming in public; and some subjects of prayer may be suggested in the act of

associated worship which are not always essential in retirement.

There are, however, few parts of prayer in which it is more possible to err than on the subjects of petition, for what we think we want is not always what would be most to our advantage. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought." Rom. viii. 26.

What it *is* lawful to pray for, under some circumstances, may not be a kind of blessing concerning which it becomes us to employ so much earnestness, or perseverance in prayer, as upon some other subjects. This would be a more strange world than it *is*, if all the prayers of some good people were immediately answered.

In petitions for spiritual blessings, personal or public, it is not easy to ask more than has been promised, or more than is desirable for the glory of God; but here, also, it must be remembered that "the Judge of all the earth will do right."

A petition which is not literally answered may not be entirely ineffective. God sometimes rewards his people by giving *them* the blessings which their benevolence has asked for others. "And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return TO YOU." Matt. x. 13.

Intercession, so far as that term describes an act performed by man, is but another word for petition on the account of others. It is lawful to ask those blessings for others which to ourselves appear desirable; and there are some blessings which a good man may ask for others without hoping to enjoy them himself.

"There is also another kind of petition which is used frequently in the Old Testament, and that is, *Imprecation*, or a calling for vengeance and destruction upon our enemies; but this is very seldom to be used under the gospel, which is a dispensation of love; and should never be used against our personal enemies, but only against the enemies of Christ, and such as are irreconcilable to him. Christ hath taught us in his life, and given us an example at his death, to forgive and pray for our personal enemies, for that is a noble singularity and glory of our religion."*

A FEW SUBJECTS OF PETITION,

SELECTED FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

For the attention of God to our prayers. Psalm cxxx. 2.
For power to pray. Psalm li. 15.
For the acceptance of our worship. Psalm xix. 14; cxix. 169; cxli. 2.
That the kingdom of God may be advanced. Matt. vi. 11.
That the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Matt. vi. 11.

* Watts.

For our daily bread. Matt. vi. 11. See also Agur's prayer, Prov. xxx. 8.
For forgiveness of sins, as we forgive them that trespass against us. Matt. vi. 12.
For preservation from temptation. Matt. vi. 13.
For deliverance from evil. Matt. vi. 13.
For the gift of the Holy Spirit. Luke, xi. 13.
For the continuance of the Holy Spirit. Psalm li. 11.
For regeneration. Psalm li. 10.
For the indwelling of Christ in the heart. Eph. iii. 17.
That we may be enabled to comprehend the love of Christ. Eph. iii. 18.
To be filled with the fulness of God. Eph. iii. 19.
For wisdom in general. James, i. 5.
For wisdom to perform particular duties. 1 Kings, iii. 9, 10.
For wisdom to guide in trying circumstances. 2 Chron. xx. 12.
For that knowledge of human frailty which is essential to the study of true wisdom. Psalm ix. 12.
For understanding, to comprehend the Scriptures. Psalm cxix. 18, 25.
For understanding, to discern the path of duty. Psalm xxvii. 11; cxliii. 8.
For the continuance of life. Psalm cii. 24.
For the recovery of health. 2 Kings, xx. 5; Ps. xxxix. 13.
For temporal prosperity. 1 Chron. iv. 10.
For spiritual prosperity. Psalm cxviii. 25.
To be enabled to do the will of God. Psalm cxliii. 10.
To be turned to God. Psalm lxxx. 9.
That we may stand perfect and complete in the will of God. Col. iv. 12.
To be kept from sin. Psalm xix. 12, 13.
That God would set a watch before the door of our mouth, and keep the door of our lips. Psalm cxli. 3.

To be kept from presumptuous sins, and from secret faults. Psalm xix. 12.
To be kept in the way of truth. Psalm lxxx. 17, 18.
For religion in early life, or at an early period. Ps. xc. 14.
For salvation now. Psalm cxviii. 25.
For the help of God in the time of old age. Ps. lxxi. 18.
For grace to help in time of need. Hebrews, iv. 16.
That we may not be disgraced. Psalm cxix. 31.
That we may be refreshed. Romans, xv. 32.
That we may be upheld. Psalm cxix. 117.
That we may be kept from being ashamed of our hope. Psalm cxix. 116.
That good men may not have reason to be ashamed for our sake. Psalm lxix. 6.
That we may be sought by God when we have wandered from him. Psalm cxix. 176.
That God will be our advocate. Psalm cxix. 134.
That God will save us from the oppression of man. Psalm cxix. 134.
That we may enjoy the light of God's countenance. Psalm cxix. 135.
That our souls may be quickened. Psalm cxix. 149.
That we may be permitted to go to the house of God. Psalm lxxxiv.
That our trouble may not seem little before our God. Neh. ix. 31.
That God would shew us a right way for ourselves, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. Ezra, viii. 21.
For the poor, and the fatherless. Psalm lxxxii. 3.
For the needy. Psalm lxxxii. 4.
For the revival of religion. Psalm lxxxv. 6.
That God may search our hearts, try our ways, and lead us in the way everlasting. Psalm cxxxix. 24.
That prayer may be speedily heard. Psalm lxix. 17.
That we may have the presence of God. Psalm lxix. 17.

That we may be enabled successfully to fulfil the duties of our station. See the beautiful prayer of a servant. Gen. xxiv. 12, 42.
For a happy state of mind. Psalm lxxxvi. 4.
For the preservation of ourselves and families from real or supposed enemies. Gen. xxxii. 11.
That the church may not suffer for our imperfections. Ps. lxix. 6.
For faith. Luke, xvii. 5.
For hope. Lam. iii. 29.
For love. 1 Thess. iii. 12.
For zeal. John, vi. 63.
For patience. Col. i. 9, 11.
For peace and joy in believing. Rom. xv. 13.
For perseverance. 1 Pet. iv. 19.
Seamen praying for help in a storm. Psalm cvii. 28.
Traveller asking for a prosperous journey. Rom. i. 10.
That God would strengthen that which he has wrought for us. Psalm lxviii. 28.
That we may have a token for good. Psalm lxxxvi. 17.
That the gates of righteousness may be opened to us. Ps. cxviii. 19.
That God will not hide his face when we are in trouble. Psalm cii. 2.
That our soul may not be left destitute. Psalm cxli. 8.
That the merciful kindness of God may be for *our* comfort. Psalm cxix. 76.
That our hearts may be sound. Psalm cxix. 80.
That we may not be inclined to any evil thing. Ps. cxli. 4.
That the iniquities of our youth may not be remembered. Psalm xxv. 7.
That we may be preserved from covetousness. Ps. cxix. 36.
That we may be made to know our end, and the measure of our days. Psalm xxxix. 4.
For all heavenly things. Col. iii. 1.

For preservation from sins of the tongue. Psalm cxli. 3.
That we may not sin with men that work iniquity, nor eat of their dainties. Psalm cli. 4.
To be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thess. v. 23.
For all saints. Eph. vi. 19.
For the prosperity of Zion. Psalm li. 18.
For the peace of Zion. Psalm cxxxii. 9.
That God would cause his face to shine upon his sanctuary. Dan. ix. 17.
That a minister may be sent to a specified church. Phil. 22.
For the ministers of Christ. Romans, xv. 30.
That ministers may be enabled to speak. Eph. vi. 19.
That God may send, or thrust forth, labourers into his harvest. Matt. ix. 38.
For the extension of God's light and truth. Psalm xliii. 3.
For the personal glory of Christ. Psalm lxxii. 15.
That God may make our children and friends holy, and generous to his cause. 1 Chron. xxix. 18, 19.
That God may bless the substance of our children, and accept the work of their hands. Deut. xxxiii. 11.
That our children may be "acceptable to their brethren." Deut. xxxiii. 24.
That their shoes may be iron and brass, and as their days their strength. Deut. xxxiii. 25.
That the sighing of the prisoner may come before God. Psalm xxix. 11.
For those that are appointed to die. Psalm lxxix. 11.
For kings, and all that are in authority. 1 Tim. ii. 2.
For persecutors. Acts, vii. 60.
For enemies. Matt. v. 44.
That the wicked devices and desires of the ungodly may not be realized. Psalm cxl. 7.
For unfaithful friends. 2 Tim. iv. 16.

For the Jews. Romans, x. i.

That the people, yea, all the people, may praise God. Ps. lxvii. 5.

For all men. 1 Tim. ii. 1.

For unity of mind among believers. Romans, xv. 6.

For direction in the choice of officers in the church of God. Acts, i. 24.

That the nations may be enabled to appreciate the government of God. Psalm lxvii. 4.

That the heaven, and earth, the sea, and every thing that moveth therein, may praise God. Psalm lxix. 34.

That the God of peace may be with all believers. Romans, xv. 33.

That the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with all who love him in sincerity. Rom. xvi. 21; Eph. vi. 24.

That the wickedness of the wicked may come to an end. Psalm vii. 9.

That we may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass:—*i. e.* when the judgment shall come on men unawares. See Luke, xxi. 34—36.

That believers may be one in the Father and Christ, that the world may believe the divine mission of Christ. John, xvii. 23.

That the whole earth may be filled with his glory. Psalm lxxii. 19.

NOTE.—As it is not pretended that the above includes more than a *few* of the supplications mentioned in Scripture, it may be suggested, as a profitable employment for young Christians, that they should transcribe such a collection for themselves—adding thereto as they may observe the petitionary parts of the word of God in their daily reading: and pursuing the same method with the pleadings, thanksgivings, &c.

V.—PLEADING.

We are not to suppose that our arguments can have any real influence on God's own will, and persuade him contrary to what He was before inclined; but as he condescends to talk with us after the manner of men, so He admits us to talk with Him in the same manner.—WATTS.

"THE fifth part of prayer may be called pleading with God: which though it be not so distinct a part by itself, but rather belongs to the work of petition and request, yet it is so very large and diffusive, that it may well be separated by itself, and treated of distinctly."*

It is so great a mercy that a sinner is permitted to urge any plea before God, that an awakened mind will hardly be indifferent to this part of prayer.

Pleading is an urging of the grounds of a sinner's acceptance with God, and a devotional mention of the reasons which render it important that prayer should be answered. It is therefore not only the fulfilment of a duty, and an authorized method of seeking blessings from the Most High, but, in its tendency, it is eminently conducive to the "faith without which it is impossible to please God."

* Watts.

The GREAT PLEA, which, on the authority of the word of the Redeemer; after the example of New Testament worship; and under the sanction of the typical rites of the Old Testament, it behoves a Christian worshipper to mention before the throne, is THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. This gives efficacy and value to every other consideration which it is lawful to urge in the exercise of prayer; and, indeed, it is this only which brings a fallen creature into circumstances in which he may mention other considerations before God. This is the plea in comparison with which every other may be forgotten—the plea which will avail him who has no other to offer.

Subordinately to this great plea, or rather as implying confidence in the efficacy of this, it is permitted to the sinner that he should plead those attributes of God, of which he could not otherwise think with holy delight; and even to mention, as will be seen by a reference to the Scripture passages below, a considerable variety of inferior considerations. Oh! the grace of that Redeemer who first opens a way for the sinner himself—and then for his arguments before the only wise and gracious Lord God!

Grounds of Pleading, and Arguments with God, selected from the Scriptures.

THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,
John, xvi. 23.

The mercy of God. Psalm lxix. 13.
The greatness of God's tender mercies. Psalm cxix. 156.
The truth of God. Psalm lxxxix. 49.
The truth of God's salvation. Psalm lxix. 13.
The wisdom of God. Daniel, ii. 20.
The faithfulness of God. Psalm cxliii. 1.
The righteousness of God. Psalm xxxv. 24.
The justice of God. Psalm lxxxix. 14.
The power of God. Psalm lxxxix. 8.
The creative acts of God. Psalm cxxxviii. 8.
The unchangeableness of God. Psalm cii. 27.
The eternity of God. Psalm cii. 27.
The loving-kindness of God. Psalm lxix. 16.
That there is forgiveness with God. Psalm cxxx. 4.
That the Lord will not despise a broken and a contrite heart. Psalm li. 17.
That we are brought very low. Psalm lxxix. 8.
The insufficiency of all human aid. Psalm lx. 11.
That the Lord is the God of our salvation. Psalm xxv. 5.
The promises of God. Psalm lxxxix. 49.
The glory of the Name of God. Psalm lxxix. 9.
Redeeming grace. Psalm lxxiv. 2.
The welfare of the congregation of the people. Ps. vii. 7.
The honour of God in the world. Psalm lxvii. 1, 2.
The word of God. Psalm cxix. 81.
The covenant of grace. Psalm cxliii. 10.
The extent of the suppliant's necessities. Psalm xiii. 1; xxv. 16; lxxxix. 13; cxliii. 7.
What we have already suffered. Psalm lxxxv. 6.

Past mercies shewn to ourselves. Psalm lxxi. 17, 18.
The favour God generally bears to his people. Psalm cvi. 4; lxxv. 4.
The relation in which we are permitted to stand to God, as his servants. Psalm cxliii. 12.
Pious relationships. Psalm lxxxvi. 16.
The enmity of the wicked. Psalm liv. 1, 2, 3; lxxxix. 10.
Their reproaches of the Name of God. Psalm lxxiv. 18.
The consequences which are likely to ensue if prayer be not answered. Psalm xxviii. 1.
The general guilt of man. Psalm clxiii. 2.
The confidence of the suppliant's expectation. Psalm xxxiii. 2.
That prayer is made in an acceptable time. Ps. lxix. 13.
The honour that has been conferred in permission to suffer for the sake of God. Psalm lxix. 7.
The gratitude which the suppliant hopes to feel, if prayer should be answered. Psalm lxxx. 16; lxxxv. 6.
That God has dwelt in Zion. Psalm lxxiv. 2.

VI.—PROFESSION OR SELF-DEDICATION.

This is seldom mentioned by writers as a part of prayer; but to me it appears so very necessary in its nature, and so distinct from all the rest, that it ought to be treated of separately.—WATTS.

THE claims of God upon the love and service of his people—the special calls to dedication in the written Word—our own particular obligations—the examples of holy men—and the *tendency* of solemn *dedication*,—afford so many motives to

the frequent and devout use of this part of prayer.

Hastiness of expression, in the act of self-dedication, is peculiarly to be deprecated; as the sad example of Peter's fall most painfully proclaims; but the act itself is not improper when it is attended to in a proper spirit.

The proper spirit of self-dedication is the spirit of dependence upon the grace and help of God. A part of the wisdom of believers is to "know every man the plague of his own heart," and to trust rather in Him "who worketh in them to will and to do of his own good pleasure," than in the vain and uncertain thing called human resolution. He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool, (Prov. xxviii. 26,) "but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." Ps. xxxii. 10.

The failure of our promised obedience does not, however, *always* result *only* from the spirit in which it is promised. Unwatchfulness *after* a vow is as likely to prevent its fulfilment as an ostentatious spirit at the time of making it.

Dr. Watts treats of Profession, or Self-dedication in prayer, under the following heads:—

1. A profession of our relation to God.

2. A profession of our former transactions with God.

3. A present surrender of ourselves to God, and a profession of the present exercise of our several affections and graces towards him.

4. A profession of our humble and holy resolution to be the Lord's for ever.

5. A renouncing of everything that is inconsistent herewith.

TOPICS OF PROFESSION IN PRAYER, SELECTED FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

Of humiliation for sin. Psalm li. 3.
That we are not haughty. Psalm cxxxi. 1.
Of confidence in the mercy of God. Psalm lii. 8.
That God is our God. Psalm lxiii. 1.
Of rejoicing in God's salvation. Psalm xix. 14.
Of obedience to the word of God. Psalm xxvii. 8.
Of lifting up our soul to God. Psalm xxv. 1.
Of trust in the providence of God, in the midst of danger. Psalm iii. 6; Psalm xi. 1.
Of trusting in God for ever. Psalm lii. 8.
Of worshipping in the fear of God. Psalm v. 7.
Of general integrity. 2 Kings, xx. 3.
Of determination to worship God in the morning. Ps. v. 3.
Of praising with the whole heart. Psalm ix. 1, 3.
Of devoting the tongue to the service of God. Ps. lvii. 8.
Of restraining the tongue from sinful employments. Ps. xvii. 3.
Of determination to love the Lord. Psalm xviii. 1.
Of resolution to walk uprightly. Psalm xxvi. 11.
Of the desire to dwell in God's house for ever: and to seek after this blessing. Psalm xxvii. 4.
Of present fruitfulness in the house of God, and recognition of the grace which occasions it. Psalm lii. 8.

Of determination to call upon God. Psalm lv. 15.
Of hope in God. Psalm xxxix. 7; Ps. cxix. 81.
Of resolution to pray thrice a day. Psalm lv. 16.
Of waiting on God all the day. Psalm xxv. 5.
Of determination to pray earnestly. Psalm lv. 16.
Of a disposedness to bless God while life shall continue. Psalm lxiii. 4.
Of determination to aim at good behaviour. Psalm ci. 2.
Of love to Christ. John, xxi. 17.
Of love to God's testimonies. Psalm cxix. 167.
Of depending on the help of God, for the performance of every duty. Psalm cxix. 32.
Of being satisfied with nothing less than the likeness of God. Psalm xvii. 15.
Of fixedness of the heart. Psalm lvii. 7.
Of determination to praise God with singing. Ps. lxix. 30.
Of self-resignation to the providence and grace of God. Psalm lxxiii. 24.
That we wait for God. Psalm cxxx. 5.
Of intention to pay vows, in the church, and immediately. Psalm cxvi. 18.
Of taking delight in the commandments of God. Psalm cxix. 42.
Of determination to walk in our integrity. Psalm xxvi. 11.
See example of solemn covenanting with God. Neh. ix. 38.

VII. — THANKSGIVING.

Consider what an intolerable hypocrisy it is to be more earnest suitors for mercy, than thankful acknowledgers of mercies received.—T. T.

"GIVING of thanks" may "be made for all men," and it is so pleasing a part of worship, that to

neglect this is not only to rob God of the glory due unto his name, but to deprive ourselves of much comfort, and of an encouragement to continued supplication.

Thanksgiving, if offered in the first part of a prayer, tends to endear the character of God, and thus to prepare for the remainder. If it be offered at the close, it may then serve to cheer the mind, and thus dispose to stronger faith when the service is concluding. It is found in various places in different Psalms, and this circumstance shews that believers are not bound to one unvarying order in prayer.

In general, whatever has been a proper subject of Petition, may become a suitable topic of Thanksgiving; but as the mercy of God is more extensive than the most enlightened and enlarged prayers of his people, a *grateful* mind will discover many occasions to give thanks, when ignorance and dulness have prevented petition.

Intentional ingratitude is so heinous an offence, that the worst of men will hardly admit that they are guilty of it towards their earthly benefactors: *how* should we watch against it when our BEST Friend is concerned! Yet it is one decided characteristic of the unregenerate that they are "unthankful," while they are "unholy." How necessary is *regeneration!* and the continued influence of the Holy Spirit!

Did our amiable poet mean to teach these doctrines?—

> "Ten thousand, thousand, precious *gifts*,
> My daily thanks employ;
> *Nor is the least*, a CHEERFUL HEART,
> That *tastes* those gifts with joy."

The happiest moments in the pilgrimage of a Christian are often spent in this delightful exercise, and it will doubtless constitute a blissful portion of the ecstasies of heaven.

It is a proof of the imperfection of human nature that even thanksgiving is directed to be offered to God and the Father *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* How low is sinful man fallen when his very gratitude cannot be accepted but by the merits of another! How great is the mercy of that God who provides in Christ for the acceptance of *every part* of prayer. See Eph. v. 20.

A FEW SUBJECTS OF THANKSGIVING TO GOD,
SELECTED FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

For life. Isaiah, xxxviii. 19.
For preservation under particular circumstances. Psalm lvi. 13.
For remembrance in our low estate. Psalm xxxvi. 23.
For comfort. Isaiah, xii. 1.
For help in sickness. Psalm ciii. 2.
For help in trouble. Psalm cxvi i. 5.
For dealing well with us. Psalm cxix. 65.
For family mercies. Gen. xxxii. 10.

For giving food to all flesh. Psalm cxxxvi. 25.
For the pardon of sin. Psalm lxxxv. 2.
For HIS UNSPEAKABLE GIFT. 2 Cor. ix. 15.
For the gift of the Spirit. Neh. ix. 20.
For meetness to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Col. i. 12.
For helping Christians to care for one another. 2 Cor. viii. 16; Col. i. 3, 4.
For the faith of other Christians. Col. i. 3, 4.
For the spread of the Gospel. Matt. xi. 25.
For the honour of Christ. Psalm cxviii. 22, 23.
For permission to do anything for Christ. 1 Tim. i. 12.
At the remembrance of His holiness. Psalm xcvii. 12.
Of his goodness. Ezra, iii. 11.
For the gifts bestowed on us by means of many persons. 2 Cor. i. 11.
That others are enriched by Him in utterance and knowledge. 1 Cor. i. 4, 5.
That their faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of them all toward each other aboundeth. 2 Thess. i. 3.
For the duration of the mercy of the Lord. Psalm cxviii. 1.
For the election and calling of other Christians. 2 Thess. i. 3.
On meeting with Christian friends. Acts, xxviii. 15.
For making his ministers to triumph in Christ. 2 Cor. ii. 14.
For putting into the hearts of his servants an earnest care for the welfare of the churches. 2 Cor. viii. 16.
For the Christian love of our brethren. 1 Thess. iii. 9.
For victory over the grave. 1 Cor. xv. 57.
For all things. Eph. v. 20.

NOTE.—Endeavour to remember what former subjects of petition have now become subjects of thanksgiving; and consider what are the peculiar occasions of gratitude from those on whose behalf you are offering this part of prayer.

See Note on page 220.

VIII. — BLESSING.

Blessing has a distinct sense from praise or adoration, and is distinguished also from thanksgiving.—WATTS.

"IN Psalm cxlv. 10, it is said, All thy works praise thee, and thy saints bless thee; i. e. Even the inanimate creation, which are the works of God, manifest his attributes and his praises; but his saints do something more—they bless his name: which part of worship consists in these two things:—1. In mentioning the several attributes and glories of God with inward joy, satisfaction, and pleasure. 2. Wishing the glories of God may for ever continue."*

EXAMPLES OF BLESSING GOD.

For his goodness. Psalm c. 4, 5.
For his greatness. Psalm civ. 1.
For his creative energies. Psalm civ. 5.
For the wonders of the world. Psalm civ. 24, 25, &c.
For holding our soul in life, and not suffering our feet to be moved. Psalm lxvi. 8, 9.
For forgiving our iniquities. Psalm ciii. 3.
For healing our diseases. Psalm ciii. 3.
For crowning us with loving-kindness, and tender mercies. Psalm ciii. 4.
For care of creation. Psalm civ. 13—19.
For washing the robes of his people, and making them white in the blood of the Lamb. Rev. vii. 12, 14.
For answering prayer. Psalm lxvi. 20.

* Watts.

For daily benefits. Psalm lxviii. 19.
For the lights of heaven. Psalm civ. 19.
For the darkness. Psalm civ. 20.
For all his benefits. Psalm ciii. 2.
Because his mercy is everlasting. Psalm c. 4, 5.
Because his truth endureth to all generations. Ps. c. 4, 5.
Because he is clothed with honour and majesty. Ps. civ. 1.
Because his glory shall endure for ever. Psalm civ. 3.
Because he hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. Eph. i. 3.
Because he hath begotten us again to a lively hope of future blessings. 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

CONCLUSION.

"We cannot," writes Rev. M. Henry, "be always praying; we must come down from this mount: nor may we be over long, so as to make the duty a task or toil to ourselves, or those that join with us. We have other work that calls for our attendance. Jacob wrestles with the angel, but he must go, for the day breaks: we must therefore think of concluding. The prayers of David the son of Jesse must be ended. But how shall we conclude? so as to have the impressions of the duty kept always in the imagination of the thoughts of our heart." The wise man then proceeds to remark,

"1. We may sum up our requests in some comprehensive petitions at the conclusion of the whole matter. Heb. xiii. 20; 1 Thess. iii. 5; 1 Peter, v. 10.

"2. We may then beg for the audience and acceptance of our poor weak prayers for Christ's sake.

"3. We may then beg for the forgiveness of what has been amiss in our prayer.

"4. We may then recommend ourselves to the conduct, protection, and government of the Divine grace in the further services that lie before us, and in the whole course of our conversation.

"5. We may conclude all with doxologies, or solemn praises of God, ascribing honour and glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and sealing up all our praises and prayers with an affectionate Amen."

Amen is a Hebrew word, signifying Truth, Faithfulness, Certainly, Surely, Verily, &c. "It implies," says Dr. Watts, "a belief of all that we have said concerning God and ourselves; a wishing and desiring to obtain all that we have prayed for; a confirmation of all our professions, promises, and engagements to God; and the hope and sure expectation of the acceptance of our persons, and audience of our prayers."

The concluding Amen is eminently calculated to excite becoming considerations in the mind

of a devout worshipper. As an affirmation of what has previously been uttered, it tends to encourage a solemn and devout frame of the mind; as expressive of an earnest desire for the blessings that have been sought, it may further consistent anxiety that prayer should be answered; as a binding addition to the acts of previous self-dedication, it may increase the motives to general holiness of life; as a remembrancer of the stability of the promises of God, it may promote a cheerful reliance on Him "that heareth prayer;" as leaving most strongly on the mind the name of the faithful and true witness,* by whom alone all prayer is accepted, it may endear the principles of the everlasting Gospel; and as anticipating the employments of heaven,† it may leave upon the spirit a delightful hope of future worship,—of worship more spiritual, more honourable, more intelligent, more durable, and more truly felicitous than any of which imperfect men on earth can ever be capable. To engage in *that* worship may the reader and the writer be mercifully prepared.

AMEN.

* See Rev. i. 18.

† See Rev. v. 14, and xix. 4.

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